

The geopolitical origins of Russian strategic culture and its enlightenment in China*

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The main challenge for Russia in the post-Cold War era is that the geographical space available for strategic autonomy has been greatly compressed. Due to the checks and balances of Western powers, the security panic of neighboring countries, and the decline of its own strength after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it is difficult to maintain the Strategic control model. Russia is torn between imperial historical traditions and nation-state strategic narratives. Will Russia return to the imperial age? The investigation of the geopolitical mechanism of Russian strategic culture is helpful to study and judge its regular behavior pattern. Continental identity, flanking position, and terrestrial claim tradition are three variables which have shaped Russia's strategic culture. At the same time, the pursuit of sea power, the yearning for modernization in the heartland, and the wise shrinking of tough external forces have verified the logic that Russia's strategic culture will be adjust dynamically with the change of relative power status and strategic environment. Russian strategic culture shapes strategic motivation dominated by fear and exerts indirect and nonlinear influence on strategic behavior including strategic intention. Risk aversion/risk-taking, the two decision-making preferences for dealing with geopolitical risks, are caused by differences in the degree of fear of power status and the external environment. Through the historical practice of Russian strategic culture investigation, the author believes that: if the current and future development trends show a negative expected trend, then Russia will make necessary revisions to the existing historical experience to suit the current strategic situation. The process-tracking study of Russian imperial history since Peter the Great also verifies the theoretical inferences of this study from case studies. The study of Russian strategic culture will help to promote the deepening and expansion of cooperation between China and Russia. Although the cooperation between the two countries started from the geopolitical pressure of the global strategic offensive of the United States, the beneficial dialogue and communication at the strategic and cultural level can transcend the historical normalcy of the cooperation between the two countries forced by the external geopolitical threats and shape the strategic stability of China and Russia.

Keywords: geopolitics, strategic culture, sea power, land power, Russia.

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As China's land neighbor, Russia's strategic behavior model has an important impact on China's strategic security. Although uncertainty is the norm in the international system and national strategic behavior, the strategic research and judgment on Russia cannot rely on isolated judgments on current hotspots. Russia's strategic behavior has a profound geopolitical logic and has formed a strategic cultural tradition through historical evolution. The research objective of this paper will be based on the analysis of Russian history to conceptualize and summarize, and extract the geopolitical law, and the important reference system of Russian history is the imperial dimension¹ [1]. Although the Soviet Union was different from Tsarist Russia in terms of social system and ideology, it basically followed the geopolitical logic and strategic behavior model of Tsarist Russia. The empire occupies an important narrative space in Russian history, and the investigation of strategic culture in the imperial period is not only of historical significance, but also of strategic reference value for the contemporary era. After all, the historical complex of the empire is still looming in Russia's handling of relations with other major powers. As a traditional land power country, Russia's pursuit of sea power mainly relies on two means of expanding its territory from the land, seeking access to the sea and building a powerful navy. The analysis of Russia's strategic culture cannot be separated from the strategic relationship between land power and sea power. Russia usually resorts to the preservation of the global marine system and the expansion of the regional continental system to seek a strategically autonomous position in time and space. The strategic cultural orientation reflected by the strategic behavior in Russia's history is an organic combination of limited risk-taking and positive status quo risk aversion. In the selection of research methods, considering that the investigation of the geopolitical root of Russian strategic culture is a causal mechanism, rather than exploring the correlation, qualitative rather than quantitative research will be more conducive to the realization of case analysis. In addition, this paper also traces the process of important strategic cases in different historical periods of Russia, and realizes the empirical test.

Concept definition of strategic culture and geopolitical research path

The material sources of strategic culture are: geography, climate, natural resources, international norms, intergenerational changes, technological revolution, etc.; its political sources include: historical experience, political systems, elite beliefs, military organizations, etc.; the sociocultural sources of strategic culture are: myths and symbols, key texts that provide actors with appropriate strategic actions [2, p.96]. A lagging strategic culture can create barriers to innovation in strategic thinking and action: the defeat of Prussia by France in 1806 made Clausewitz recognize an important lesson: State policy in the decades preceding the war had already determined the results of the war. France's strategic conception of World War I originated in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, and its strategic conception in World War II originated in World War I. Some people say that generals are always preparing for the previous war, not the next one. Design of the main weapon

¹ There have been four state forms in Russian history: the first is the Grand Duchy of Moscow established since Ivan III, the second is the Tsarist Russian Empire established by Peter the Great, the third is the Soviet Union established by Lenin, and the fourth is the contemporary Russian Federation established by Putin.

system for 2025 should begin in 1995, otherwise it will not meet the scheduled timetable [3, p. 109, 111, 135].

There are three main approaches to studying strategic culture: the first view considers culture as a variable that may influence behavior, but is less important than international systemic pressures. The second is to view culture as a conceptual carrier that can explain some, if not all, strategic behavior, with strategic culture being an independent variable. The third emphasizes that aspects of human behavior can only be understood through immersion in a specific strategic culture, and it is impossible to measure the impact of culture on strategy [2, p. 90]. According to the needs of the Russian strategic issues studied, this paper adopts the second research path, which regards strategic culture as an important independent variable, and separates it in theoretical experiments, but adds other variable explanations to the narrative of historical cases². According to the needs of the case study, the author defines strategic culture as: it is a highly abstract view of a country's strategic thinking and historical behavior. It is a similar behavior pattern that appears repeatedly in the process of a country dealing with geopolitical threats. Therefore, it has continuity and will be dynamically adjusted with the changes of the country's external environment and internal political and economic environment [4].

Strategic culture mainly shapes a country's strategic motives, such as fear, interest, honor, revenge, etc. Its influence on strategic intentions and implementation is more indirect. In understanding Russian behavior, the filter of its own culture is at least as important as the motivation from the international system [5, p. 195–211]. The judgment of actor's motivation is of great significance, because one party's decision and others' judgment of this decision motive often produce a series of chain reactions [6, p. 106]. There is an important distinction between motives and intentions. Motivations are innate, that is, they are an inherent strategic cultural characteristic of a country. A state's intention, what it intends to do, stems from the state's interaction with its international environment. Countries with different strategic motivations will choose the same behavior in a given situation, that is, they may have the same intention. But the type of state differentiated in terms of strategic motives is critical, because its motives can influence how a state responds to another's strategy. Motivations can be divided into security motives and greed motives, and intentions can be divided into status quo/revisionism [7, p. 107–108]. This article does not attempt to research the all levels of the Russian strategic culture, just focus on the geopolitical dimension of strategic culture analysis. The author believes that the influence of geopolitics on strategic culture is mainly reflected in shaping the motivation of fear. Although Russia always has the sense of insecurity of tradition and impossibility, when there are more buffer zones, it will have relative security benefits to reduce the fear of external threats.

² The study of strategic culture can easily fall into two extremes: first, it stays in the description of the inductive method of historical facts and development context, and lacks abstraction and conceptualization; second, it loses a lot of important history when drawing theory from history detail. As a result, the study of the deductive method of strategic culture distorts the historical law. Considering the high degree of subjectivity of strategic cultural cognition and the extensiveness of historical evolution, it is necessary to comprehensively apply systematic methods and case studies to recognize the explanatory power of conceptual variables while paying attention to material variables. Given that strategic culture and other variables are likely to have a causal relationship with each other, in order to avoid reverse causality in research methods, the author will focus on the causes of strategic culture and its historical impact, rather than focusing on the reaction of other variables to strategic culture.

The understanding that allies and enemies are not permanent, under the filter of geopolitics, it is easy to exacerbate Russia's sense of fear. Fear breeds security interests and may also drive Russia to seek maximization of power to achieve hegemony goals. A power-maximizing Russia does not rule out a sense of fear, on the contrary, fear of systemic checks and balances as its expansion is likely to exacerbate insecurity. If it is limited expansion, such as continental expansion or colonial expansion, its expansion is premised on not threatening the status quo of national security. Even excessive expansion, such as continental expansion and colony expansion, may lengthen the realization cycle of expansionary strategic goals in time due to the effect of fear, such as from 5 years to 30 years, from rapid expansion to slow expansion, then it may also circumvent system checks and balances. A full-blown revisionist state, even Napoleon I France or Hitler's Germany, would still suffer from the fear factor, as they would increase security fears by taking too much risk. The core goal of domination or expansion can also be to assuage fear. There is a clear relationship between expected fear and threat perception, and when fear rises, states tend to overinterpret subtle evidence of threats from other countries, such as Russia's sensitive response to domestic revolutions in Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. When the threat is not perceived, even in the face of clear objective evidence, it is difficult to mobilize defense resources, such as Stalin's miscalculation that before the outbreak of the Soviet-German war that Germany would not send troops any time soon. Threats may also be perceived as non-existent, either because the adversary's capabilities or own vulnerabilities are exaggerated, or because the adversary is not hostile at all. The Russian strategic culture under the geopolitical dynamism gave birth to the strategic motivation of fear. When relative power is declining, Russia, which is dominated by fear, is more inclined to avoid geopolitical risks in its strategic behavior preference; while when its relative power is dominant, Russia is more inclined to take geopolitical risks in its strategic behavior preference. Therefore, strategic culture itself cannot exclude material variables from focusing on conceptual variables.

In terms of research methods, studies on Russian strategic culture should follow a rationalist perspective in the context of geopolitics, which is a complete branch of realism theory, a special form of realism based on the influence of natural environments defined by geography and technology [8]. Analyzing strategic culture with the aid of geopolitical tools by no means implies geographic determinism. It is traditionally believed that in the ranking of the degree of strategic autonomy at the time and space level, the maritime country has the highest degree of autonomy, the central continental country has the least degree of autonomy, and the land-based flanking country has the middle degree of autonomy. Russia has played the role of a land-based flanking country in most historical periods, but it is also worried about changing itself from a flanking country to a central country due to changes in the strategic relationship between the great powers. The identity of the continent and the ocean is not unchanged. During the Hundred Years War between Britain and France, the United Kingdom intended to expand on the European continent. Even for a period after the Tudor Dynasty, the United Kingdom still did not recognize the geographical identity of the island country. The continental complex was only completely eliminated after the British Industrial Revolution. During World War II, Japan was hardly an island country in terms of culture and identity. Coveting the territory of the East Asian continent and successive wars against China and the United States turned it from a maritime flank country into a maritime center country. Geography and strategic preferences

are correlated, but not decisive. Geopolitics is not only related to the spatial dimension, but also to the investigation of time variables, because geopolitics pays close attention to the importance of technological change, and will re-evaluate the strategic and tactical significance of specific geographic elements based on technology at any time. It is true that great powers have greater autonomy, but irrational behavior will still be punished by the system, although great powers have stronger defense mechanisms and ability to withstand punishment [9, p. 69].

To sum up, this study proposes targeted research inferences: first, the important driving force of Russian strategic culture is geopolitics, which makes fear the core strategic motivation for shaping strategic culture. Second, whether it is risk-averse or risk-taking, Russia tends to believe in the importance of its relative power position, and its distrust of other countries' intentions is rooted in the openness of geopolitical space. Third, Russia tends to promote the emergence of a systemic environment that favors its own hierarchical features in the anarchy of the international system. This stems from the fact that anarchy is not evenly distributed in the international system, but appears volatility due to the influence of geographical distribution. Fourth, Russia's strategic culture will focus on the worst possible assumptions, but Russia will not always make decisions based on the worst shadow, but also weigh the feasibility probability in geopolitical practice. Fifth, when Russia's strategic culture allows it to deal with geopolitical risks, the primary consideration is how to maintain a greater degree of strategic autonomy in geopolitical space and time when motivated by fear. Although it is generally believed that security dilemmas and revisionist states cannot coexist, this study points out that Russia's strategic culture based on geopolitical fear, status quo and revisionism can all be regarded as products of security dilemmas in the process of Russia's strategic interaction with other countries³ [10].

Geopolitical dynamics and the generation of fear in Russian strategic culture

This paper argues that there are three main geopolitical dynamics to shape Russian strategic culture: geographical properties, position in the system, territorial claims. Together, they play a causal role in the generation of strategic motivation of fear, and their interaction also has an important impact on the generation of fear. The core of Russian

³ John Hertz proposed a conceptual analysis of the security dilemma, emphasizing the self-preservation instinct of the actor and the good intention of behavior. If the actor has aggressive intention, then it is not in a security dilemma. Ken Booth emphasizes the study of uncertainty in the security dilemma. Robert Jervis points out that the security dilemma does not preclude inter-state cooperation, limiting the negative impact of the security dilemma when cooperation brings benefits, non-cooperation is costly, or when defense is superior to offense and offense and defense are distinguishable. Charles Glaser criticized Jervis' views, arguing that greedy states are a key source of international conflict, that security dilemmas do not really exist, and that offensive-defense theory is flawed. Tang Shiping believes that the security dilemma only exists between defensive realism countries, and when offensive realism countries are widespread, the international conflicts that can be explained by the security dilemma are scarce. Randall Schweiler criticizes defensive realism's strategic preference for maintaining the status quo, arguing that there are "jackal" states that choose to follow the stronger in order to seek expansionary gains, and "wolf" who are dissatisfied with the status quo of the system and powerful. Therefore, the security dilemma analysis of status quo preference is unreasonable. Specifically, most of the existing security dilemma studies are based on the status quo preference. So is the security dilemma necessarily incompatible with revisionism? This article argues that even two revisionist states still have the possibility of a security dilemma.

strategic cultural cognition is a flanking continental empire, but since Peter the Great, Russia has tried to become a flanking maritime empire at the same time. What's more, Russia is worried about becoming a central continental empire surrounded by great powers, and also hopes to check and balance the maritime empires on the flanks. Whenever Russia's relative power status on land is dominant or the balance of power in Europe is stable, Russia intends to pursue becoming a land-sea amphibious power.

Geographical properties

Russia was, is and will be a country with a predominantly land-based strategic focus. The rising powers in history either consider themselves to be land-power states or sea-power states, but it is difficult to consider themselves both land-power and sea-power states at the same time. There are historical cases in which land-power states were temporarily seduced by the benefits of developing a large navy, as was the case with Spain, France, and Germany. While the possibility of gaining sea power has temporarily distracted political leaders, these efforts have been repeatedly abandoned in crises when the fundamental question turns to what kind of military might ensure the country's survival. Russia's strategic interests are mainly on the mainland, so attention will soon turn back to the land.

Power projection relies on geographic focus, and the limited national resources make it necessary to have a strategic focus within a unit of time instead of attacking from all directions. This geographic projection of power has an important geo-cultural background. Russia's identity cognition as a continental state is fundamentally different from that of a maritime state. Although technological changes have affected the effectiveness of geographic factors, the establishment of continental/ocean geographic generic identity still has an irreplaceable role in Russian strategic research. Russia's continued expansion in modern history is closely related to the geographic location of its continental empire in its heartland. Russia mainly expanded its territory to geographically contiguous areas. Its own country and sphere of influence lacked a clear distinction between overseas colonies and mother countries. After the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, the legitimacy and stability of its territorial borders were full of uncertain risks. Russia's foreign expansion includes not only geopolitical logic, but also the impact of domestic politics. The core of the political system in the Tsarist Russia period was the domestic military alliance, which formed a tradition of territorial expansion. The main difference between land power and sea power is not whether they attach importance to the strategy of sea power and whether they have a strong navy, but whether they have a deep identity rooted in marine culture. Due to the lack of the cultural identity of sea power, Peter the Great's maritime strategic reform did not continue to be carried out. Only when the strongman politics determined to develop sea power can work, can strategic emphasis on sea power rather than cultural maritime identity emerge. Most of the geopolitical threats Russia faces come from land, and it has a strategic tradition of emphasizing land over sea. Russia prioritizes land power building and land territorial security, while the navy is in a lower position, playing a defense-oriented auxiliary role [11, p. 463–464]. Whenever Russia is strong or its opponents are weak, it will resort to geographical expansion to seek access to the sea, and when the existential crisis on the mainland looms, it will retreat to the comfort zone of creating a land security surplus.

The lack of a sense of insecurity in the absence of natural geographical barriers is the direct and fundamental cause of Russia's foreign goals, which has led to high-intensity territorial and security competition between Russia and surrounding nations and countries. Russia's traditional foreign security policy (checks and balances at the global level, local expansion) and domestic mobilization system have historical evolutionary trends of self-continuity and self-reinforcing; In terms of ideas, messianic ideas correspond to expansionist behavior, and collectivist ideas correspond to totalitarian traditions. Precisely because Russian leaders continued and strengthened these ideas, their behavior also maintained the characteristics of historical inheritance and high stability. Initially expanding for defense, it eventually evolved into expanding to expand, and the expansion is endless. Russia's strategic expansion and strategic contraction will be especially manifested in territorial changes. The opening of the border has brought the concepts of defense and expansion into one in a contradictory and paradoxical way in Russian history: in order to maintain national security, it is necessary to control the sources of threats on the other side of the border in the form of foreign conquest, while the conquered region needs to be secured by the same external conquest. The strategic contradiction between defense and expansion constitutes the main strategic dilemma for Russia as a continental empire. At the beginning of the 20th century, Tsarist Russia had already controlled the core area of Eurasia—the hub area or heart of the world, and maritime countries could not penetrate into this area [12]. The heart of Eurasia is “the largest natural fortress in the world” [13]. The geographical expansion of modern Russia, compared with the overseas expansion of Western Europe, is different not only in that it is mainly continental territorial expansion, which is the extension of land borders in multiple directions, but also in that the expansion of the Russian Empire is more focused on grabbing wealth directly by occupation and looting, not indirectly by exploiting and expanding the space for trade and investment [14]. The birth of an empire is essentially a process of expanding outward from the center to the periphery. The rise of geopolitical fever in Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the return of Russia in geopolitics are not only stimulated by external pressure, but also a reflection of Russia's traditional geographical concept [15].

Position in the system

Since the 19th century, the rise of major powers other than Russia and maritime hegemony has occurred against a backdrop of confrontation between the former two. The identity recognition of the flanking strategic position has made Russia's maintenance of the European balance of power system a recurring behavior pattern in history: although the balance of power system cannot prevent Russia from falling into crisis or war, for Russia, if it can make proper arrangements, its role will be to restrict the ability of other powers to control other countries and the scale of conflicts. When Russia is highly satisfied with the status quo of the system, stability and relaxation are more sought than peace. Neither the Tsarist Empire nor the Soviet Empire intends to operate in an international system. It expects to establish itself as an international system. Russia's flank advantage is first reflected in the space level: because its military projection capabilities decrease with increasing geographic distance, Russia has an overwhelming geopolitical advantage in the competition with Western countries for strategic influence in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, and the inland regions of Central Asia. This advantage is similar to the

advantages enjoyed by the United States in the Caribbean, coastal Europe in the Maghreb region, and China in the Indochina Peninsula. The long distance has restricted the power projection of Western European powers to Eastern Europe and Russia, and weakened their deterrence and offensive capabilities against Russia. There are fewer major geographic threats in two or more opposing directions, and to a certain extent, it plays a role similar to the British “offshore balancer” in the creation of European balance of power, enabling Russia to develop strategic, economic, and cultural relations with Europe. Cooperation in other fields can also avoid the situation of multi-line combat that is surrounded by powerful land powers like Germany.

In addition to Russia’s advantage of lower policy implementation costs when dealing with opponents, the biggest advantage lies in Russia’s time sovereignty originating from a peripheral position, or time autonomy. Russia can turn the marginal peace dividend into investment in infrastructure construction for economic development. Russia has made full use of its temporal sovereignty derived from its flanking position: slowing down and lengthening the time course of territorial expansion, subdividing it into multiple steps and stages. Russia is not easy to fall into a destructive battle because it does not have many close competitors. Although Russia’s onshore flanks do not have as much strategic autonomy as the maritime flanks, for example, the rise of the Tsarist empire, accompanied by wars for hegemony with other land powers, the construction of its empire is more expensive than the establishment of the British and American empires. But Russia also took full advantage of marginal time, slowed down and lengthened the time course of territorial expansion, and subdivided it into multiple steps and stages. At the center of the European hegemony system, as long as the potential land hegemony has not established an undisputed hegemony position, then it cannot be called the master of time. And this control over the time course has become an independent influencing factor, which in turn has helped Russia win the power to determine the direction of the current situation.

The Roman Empire in history, China in the Qin and Han dynasties, the Habsburg dynasty, Ottoman Turkey, and the British Empire all belong to the category of empires, and they all have typical imperial political forms [16]. Russia has been a typical imperial club member since the 17th century [17]. Managing the huge geographic space and coordinating the contradictions among multiple ethnic groups has often become the most difficult problem for the empire. Empire is the most basic characteristic of Russia. The geographical location on the edge of Europe makes it easier for Russia to become a powerful empire. After the collapse of the Golden Horde and the decline of Turkey, a huge geopolitical vacuum was left in Southern Europe and Siberia. For Russia, as long as it overwhelms Turkey, which is also on the periphery, expanding eastward is not a problem. The marginal empire’s model determines to a certain extent Russia’s strategic preferences. Although it can hold the upper hand in the competition with Turkey, Poland, and the Qing Dynasty of China, from the perspective of economic strength, Russia is still a country on the periphery of Europe, and it is more suitable to be compared with Italy, Spain rather than Britain or Germany.

The flanks and centers are not a static existence of geography, but also include dynamic evolution characteristics at a strategic level. A geographically island country or a continental country far away from other powerful countries does naturally have flank superiority, but it may also fall into over-expansion and lead to system checks and balances and collapse due to comprehensive strategic attacks. The point at which the empire

transitioned from the expansion phase to the consolidation phase was called the Augustus threshold. Peter I crossed the threshold of Augustus in order to continue to promote the expansion of the Russian empire, but also to take an offensive posture in the struggle against powerful countries such as Sweden and the Ottoman Empire. The focus of Peter I was not to reduce the cost of governance. He wanted to use all resources and power to control and continue to extend the territory of the empire. Tsarist Russia has never been satisfied in history to only grab surplus value from the margins and squeeze its subjects in the center of the empire. In order to expand the edge of the empire, Peter's policy eventually triggered the self-colonization of the center [18, p. 50–57]. Tsarist Russia was trapped in the Crimean War and the Russian-Japanese war, and the Soviet Union was simultaneously at war with China and the United States and was involved in the War in Afghanistan in the 1970s, which also reflected the limitation of strategic trial and error of the flanking position.

Relying on the long-term perspective, from the 17th century to the end of the 20th century, the history of Russia can be seen as three similar modernization cycles: the first cycle can be called “catching up with Louis XIV”, and the second cycle is Known as “catching up with the West in the industrial revolution era”, the goal of the third cycle is to “make Russia truly a modern power in the era of chips and computers” [19]. Russia has always been in the strategic anxiety of catching up with the modern civilization of the West, and it has been magnified by the fact that Russia has a relatively strong power position but has never been able to obtain the status of unipolar hegemony. The flank makes Russia confused about its cultural identity. In the bottom of my heart, Russia is not sure whether it belongs to the East or the West? To what extent should we learn from the West, and to what extent should we maintain Russian characteristics? What are we going to learn from the West and what are the Russian characteristics? If learning from the West conflicts with maintaining Russian characteristics, what should we do? This has always been controversial in Russian military thinking and strategic concepts. The way to get rid of Russia's backwardness while maintaining the art of Russian war is a deep issue of Russian strategic culture [20, p. 169]. Inspired by the two stages of compulsive restlessness and religious fanaticism, under the two stages of European demand and Asian temptation, Russia has always had a place in the balance of power in Europe, but it has never belonged to Europe emotionally. Conquest and security need to be merged in the hearts of Russian leaders. Since the Vienna Conference to the end of the 19th century, Russia has used more military forces in foreign countries than other major powers [21, p. 9–10].

Territorial claims

For Russia, having a vast geographic space is the primary symbol of empire. The expansion is to achieve the improvement of the empire's ruled territory and time span, and to increase the sense of security through the strategic buffer zone, and the contraction is to reduce the loss of the empire's ruled territory and delay the time process of decline. In order to save imperial status and prestige, Russia may take offensive actions with defensive motives. While Ukraine's strategic location is important to Russia, its intervention in eastern Ukraine is not focused solely on resources and geostrategy. Ukraine occupies a central place in the narrative of Russian identity; After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Russians found it hard to accept Ukraine's independence. This is about strategic cultural

considerations. Ukraine matters because of the significance attached to it by Russian policymakers, which in turn relates to a broader view of Russia's relationship with the West.

The strategic logic of offensive realism and defensive realism can not fully explain the Russian strategic model, because the decision-making behavior under the perspective of Russian strategic culture does not only focus on one of the logics. Countries may be offensive-oriented or defensive-oriented. They think about how to conquer other countries on the one hand, and how to check and balance the aggressor on the other hand. Russia's understanding of the outside world and its specific diplomatic traditions have a considerable degree of continuity [22, p.512]. Russia's expansion tendency is not inconsistent with rational strategic contraction. It is deeply related to the aforementioned continental identity tradition and flanking position. Expansion and contraction are unified in Russia's strategic cultural tradition. Russia's strategic behavior in history is not always obsessed with offensive strategy. Although a certain historical period of Russia and the European powers in different degree, broke the European balance of power in the system, but its strategic goals is relatively limited, in addition to the Soviet occasionally the output of the revolution, it does not attempt to change the conquered territory of social structure, also haven't come up with a revolutionary agenda, not incite others people to overthrow their own government. Nor did he challenge Europe's established secular order of state. Russia's territorial conquest in most historical periods did not aim at the elimination of major powers. This is essentially different from the annexation wars of Napoleon and Hitler, and follows a certain informal international system. Before the outbreak of World War I, the relatively friendly relationship between the United States and Russia appeared. From the Russian perspective, it was based on profound geopolitical logic. In accordance with the realist power distribution and geographic restrictions of power projection capabilities, Russia admitted that it was unable to challenge the Monroe Doctrine of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Russia has always carried out land encroachment in areas adjacent to its territory and is not good at the British maritime hegemony in global control of key straits, bases and other strategic bases in maritime colonization and transoceanic power projection.

Russia's strategic orientation prefers offense, but the actual strategic effect reflects the characteristics of Russia's strategic forces of defensive strength and offensive weakness. Avoiding excessive extension means that Russia will shrink its borders and give up certain territories. Regarding the problem of over-extension, it involves the concept of offensive apex and weakened offensive power in the land power game. If other countries as attackers penetrate deeper into the hinterland of Russia, its absolute power weakens more. If this kind of power does not weaken as fast as the defender as the offense advances, that is to say, the reduction of absolute power is exchanged for an increase in relative power, then at this time the weakening of the offensive's power is not beyond its ability to bear. It is not necessary to avoid excessive extension under any circumstances, and sometimes it can also achieve the desired goal. If Russia, as the defensive side, can carry the offensive side and exceed its offensive peak, it will lead to a change in the battle situation. The excessive extension of the Russian empire is a dynamic variable. It will change with the changes in the resources of the parties to the conflict, with changes in the willingness to use resources, and with changes in the form of imperial rule. The limitation of the area affected by the war is an inherent characteristic of Russia's imperial war.

Regardless of whether Russia chooses to expand or contract, it tends to implement relatively offensive strategic actions. This is derived from the experience and lessons of

Russian history: first of all, modern Russia has branched out from the surrounding areas of Moscow to Central Europe, Central Asia, and the Pacific coast. This act of conquest for security evolved into expansion for expansion. Russia has a dual meaning to Europe, it is both a threat to the balance of power and one of the key factors of the balance of power. The contradiction in Russian history lies in being tortured by the two forces of mission to rescue compatriots and general insecurity at the same time, becoming the fear of splitting without expansion. Second, when Russia is in a position that it understands is capable, even if Western countries do not support itself, it will unilaterally defend its own interests. In the early 18th century, Peter the Great defeated Sweden and turned Russia into a European power. The war with Turkey lasted until the Crimean War, in which Russia confronted the major European powers. In the Soviet era, the world revolution was invented, which challenged the foundation of the existing state system. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union also acted tough in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the dispatch of troops to Afghanistan in 1979. After the Cold War, in spite of the warnings of the United States and the European Union about their arrogance and challenging the status quo, Russia interfered in the Georgia-South Ossetian military conflict. Third, the gains and losses of the appeasement policy make Russia more inclined to expand and actively launch offensives. Russia has adopted a policy of appeasement against powerful opponents three times in history, all for the purpose of delaying the time of confrontation and gaining space security, but ultimately failed to avoid being targeted: France and Russia signed a contract in 1807, and Russia recognized the status quo of French territorial conquest. Russia also participated in the continental blockade system against Britain, which led to Napoleon's attack on Russia in 1812; the "Soviet-German Non-aggression Treaty" was signed with Germany on August 23, 1939, and Russia suffered a German blitzkrieg within two years; after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia tried a pro-Western strategy, but was forced to give up due to insufficient Western economic support and NATO's eastward expansion. In Russia's view, its compromise and concession to the West have not received corresponding economic and security returns, but it has also reduced its international prestige and damaged its strategic interests. Faced with the hegemony attempts of the Napoleonic Empire, Wilhelm Germany, and Hitler Germany to conquer Europe, Russia resolutely joined the counter-insurgency alliance. Although it paid a huge price in the war, the counter-insurgency alliance won in the end. The potential hegemony's attempt to gain international dominance was shattered [23].

For Russia, it is neither possible to say goodbye to the empire nor to construct a modern nation-state identity like the rest of Europe. How to achieve autonomy in time and space is an important geopolitical problem for Russia. Increasing the space buffer and delaying the check and balance time makes Russia tend to actively intervene in Eurasian regional affairs. There are three potential geopolitical effects: the first is that Russia integrates into the regional hierarchy as a follower. This integration makes the dominant country maintain or even expand its own authority, such as Russia joining the continental blockade system of Napoleon France. The second is that Russia absorbs the regional hierarchy and becomes a new dominant country. The original authority relationship is maintained, but both the dominant and dependent countries are subject to Russian authority, such as Russia's integration of the sphere of influence of the declining Ottoman Turk Empire. The third is that the regional hierarchy did not exclude Russia, the two achieved coexistence and did not view each other in an antagonistic way, such as the Vienna system

in 1815 and the Holy Alliance thereafter. The achievement of the three effects depends to a large extent on the balance of power between Russia and other powers, changes in authority, and the specific conditions of regional mechanisms.

The dynamic influence of strategic culture on Russian geopolitical practice

The continuity and change of Russian strategic culture

In the cognitive results of any decision maker, there is a large amount of “prior knowledge”, a considerable part of which is historical knowledge. In Russia’s strategic historical narrative, the yearning for power in space and time is the meaning of the pursuit of imperial status. Current policy preferences can influence people’s memory of the past. If the interpretation of history is clearly wrong, it is likely that the interpretation is influenced by present preferences rather than the interpretation of history. If a policy leads to apparent success, it is easy for actors to implement that policy in multiple subsequent scenarios. Actors perceive these new scenarios to be similar to past scenarios, so it is wise to adopt previously successful policies where success is the source of failure [24, p. 239–296]. The pre-emptive, aggressive nature of Soviet military strategy stemmed from an insecure geography and a history of autocratic rule [25, p. 8]. In order to maintain this demand for strategic autonomy based on space and time, Russia’s actual strategic behavior will be influenced by strategic culture, and it will also consider the current status quo and future prospects based on strategic culture.

Russia has formed a realist strategy of advocating strength and dividing and conquering, pursuing the status of a powerful country and space expansion, and exchanging space for time when necessary. For Russia, demonstrating power and making it known to the country is as important as the use of power itself [26, p. 149]. The main task of Russia’s foreign policy is to seize seaports, expand territorial boundaries, expand geopolitical advantages, and seek European power status and even world hegemony. Russia’s overall foreign strategic tendencies can be divided into superiority strategy and balance of power strategy. The former advocates strength and requires the use of force against the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, China’s Manchuria, Korea, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The main representatives of this strategic tendency come from the upper-level politicians and diplomatic circles with nationalist tendencies; the latter advocates divide and rule, hoping that Russia will actively participate in the European state system, establish a balance of power through coordination among major powers, and maintain Russia’s major interests and spheres of influence. The rulers of Russia, aware of the limits of their power, sold Alaska. For Russia, not occupying territory overseas is one of the rules of its own policy, as is the British insistence that command of the seas must be possessed and maintained.

The diplomacy of the Soviet Union completely inherited the diplomatic tradition of the Tsarist Russia period, implemented geopolitical diplomacy with Eurasian characteristics, and took the initiative through military conquest, military alliance and diplomatic mediation. The upheaval of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Soviet Union not only caused the Soviet Union to lose its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, but also with the independence of the republics, the western border of Russia shrank back to the era of Ivan the Terrible, and the southern border returned to the 19th century. For Rus-

sia, Ukraine is far more geopolitical than Georgia [27, p.137–186]. In the future, Russia will take an offensive and defensive stance against the West and strive for a compromise under favorable conditions. A country's foreign policy is the result of the combined effect of its concept (the concept of its own country and the international system) and the international power structure, as well as the product of the interaction between its own characteristics and the external environment. When analyzing specific international issues, it is necessary to unify material factors and conceptual factors, combine national characteristics with external environment, and form the theoretical logic of geo-realism defined in this paper. The national identity of the successor state of the Russian Empire is rooted in its historical and cultural traditions and national strength resources, and is also the result of interaction with the outside world [28].

The Soviet Union's inheritance of Tsarist Russia's imperial tradition is mainly reflected in two levels: first, the Soviet Union inherited and expanded the territory of the Tsarist Russian Empire; second, from 1890 to 1945, Tsarist Russia/Soviet Union, it was geopolitics rather than ideology that determined its alliance strategic options and competitive strategies. The relaxation of relations between Tsarist Russia and Japan after the Russo-Japanese War, the reconciliation between Britain and Russia on the issue of colonial expansion in 1907, the close cooperation between the Soviet Union and Germany in 1923, the high degree of distrust of the Soviet Union towards Britain and France in the 1930s, the signing of the Soviet-German Nonaggression Pact in 1939 and the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in 1941 are all illustrate the striking continuity of Russia/Soviet Union's strategic behavior. This is an important manifestation of the continuity of its continentalist strategic culture. The biggest threats Russia has always faced come from Germany and Japan. Even after 1945, it only changed its opponent to the United States, and its security and survival still inherited the tradition and instinctive sense of insecurity of Tsarist Russia. The return of Russia to traditional geopolitical studies after the Cold War reflects the far-reaching influence of strategic culture. Kamaludin Gadzhiev traced the history of geopolitical thought and introduced in detail the theoretical mechanism of the heartland of land power. In his opinion, it was McKinder who provided Russia with a realist reference, namely The Western powers tried to build an independent state or alliance between Germany and Russia to prevent Germany and Russia from forming an alliance. Gennady Zyuganov provides a comprehensive overview of geopolitical theory in *The Geography of Victory: Fundamentals of Russian*. Aleksandr Dugin regarded the geopolitical challenge facing Russia as a game between Russia's land power and Western sea power. He argued that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia's western neighbors should not be affected by Western maritime powers. Russia needs to maintain control of Ukraine and other countries and maintain unity in the heartland. This is very consistent with the views of Russian President Vladimir Putin⁴ [29].

The empire pursues hierarchy, and the existence of hierarchy does not exclude anarchy. The two are not opposed to each other [30]. For Russia, establishing a hierarchical

⁴ Considering that the impact of strategic culture on strategic behavior, including strategic intentions, mentioned above is indirect, only risk-taking or risk-averse preferences are discussed here. As for whether the actual strategic effect is strategic avoidance or risk-taking, it is not only affected by the intensity of external strategic feedback, but also by the opponent's interpretation of the country's intentions, as well as how the country views the dynamic changes in the external strategic environment. In addition, in the next agenda setting, whether to choose to continue the original strategic model or realize the re-creation of the strategic model is also an influencing factor.

system and becoming a dominant country is one of the important ways to obtain economic and security benefits. For Russia, establishing a hierarchy and becoming a dominant country is one of the important ways to obtain economic and security benefits. The establishment of a hierarchy at the level of Russia's surrounding regions is less difficult to achieve, because compared with the establishment of a hierarchy at the global level, the number of countries involved is relatively limited, the geographical scope is relatively limited, and the cost is lower. When the hierarchies in some surrounding areas tend to decline, Russia usually chooses to intervene and reshape the hierarchies that are beneficial to the country. The rise and fall of the Swedish Empire, the Qing Empire, and the Napoleonic Empire are deeply related to Russia's strategic involvement in the Eurasian region. From Russia's point of view, if it stays out of the way for a long time in the process of its rise, it may fall into the dilemma that strategic measures cannot be implemented when a critical opportunity arises, and the time cost of waiting and watching is also quite huge, which is not conducive to maximizing the benefits of the rise, especially Russia worried about the risk of being marginalized by European civilization. The decline of the dominant maritime power or regional continental power, or the decline of hegemonic legitimacy authority, is seen by Russia as an important opportunity to build an empire or hegemonic rule. It is also the source of Russia's sometimes seeking over-expansion and some deviation from the original strategic culture.

The shaping path of Russian strategic culture to strategic behavior: Risk taking vs. risk aversion

Considering that the impact of strategic culture on strategic behavior, including strategic intentions, mentioned above is indirect, only risk-taking or risk-averse preferences are discussed here. As for whether the actual strategic effect is strategic avoidance or risk-taking, it is not only affected by the intensity of external strategic feedback, but also by the opponent's interpretation of the country's intentions, as well as how the country views the dynamic changes in the external strategic environment. In addition, in the next agenda setting, whether to choose to continue the original strategic model or realize the re-creation of the strategic model is also an influencing factor. Risk-taking is reflected in the coveting of an unacquired position, and risk aversion is reflected in the maintenance of an already-acquired position. The Russian strategic culture model attempts to maintain a balance between the strategic bottom line and the strategic limit. Risk appetite is not necessarily related to geographic expansion, and Russia's modern eastern expansion rarely has high risks, stemming from the general weakness of neighboring countries. Strategic culture is helpful to follow the established historical analogy memory, to make a tendency to interpret the security dilemma, and to transform the opponent from an unknown risk to a cognitive image of a known risk. This is also one of the goals or results of the strategic plan. Russia's limited strategic adventure is the normal state of its strategic cultural behavior mode. It rarely pursues unlimited power expansion outside the borders of the empire. Moderate strategic contraction or maintenance of the status quo is not uncommon in Russian history. In the strategic process between the core zone and the peripheral zone, there are completely different goals or motivational considerations. Russia's complex sea and land border environment gives it defensive advantages, and makes its long-distance conquests prone to insecurity. But what cannot be ignored is that Russia's geographic char-

acteristics across Europe and Asia and bordering the four major sea areas also allow it to have more dynamic adjustments in its strategic orientation.

In the process of pursuing the strategic existence of a maritime state in Russia as a continental country, two types of strategic determination are often underestimated: one is the underestimation of Russia's determination to maintain its territory and sphere of influence by maritime countries and other continental countries, such as France under Napoleon III and Hitler's German aggression against Russia, the territorial invasion of the October Revolution by European and American powers after World War I, and Japan's provocation against Russia during the Nalmenkan and Zhang Gufeng incident, and the United States' deployment in Greece and Turkey during the Cold War in the post-Cold War era, Russia's determination of geopolitical control over Ukraine. Second, Russia will also underestimate the maritime nations' strategic determination to maintain the edge of the Eurasian continent. Russia's territorial expansion of the Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Ocean outlets has suffered successively from the Northern War, the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, The Afghan War and other major powers intervened in the system to check and balance the pressure. Judging from the historical process, the judgment of the war situation and the intensification of combat readiness are at least partly the result of a self-circulation formed within the Russian decision-making system. There is a kind of "echo chambers" in this system. That is to say, the judgment of the highest decision-maker or even some opinions will be quickly absorbed in the system, and then reflected through a certain channel or form, so that the highest decision-maker can hear many of the same judgments or ideas from different directions [31]. It has a tendency of self-reinforcing over time, and the closer the space is to the mainland, the easier it is to strengthen the determination regardless of the cost. For most of Russian history, limited revisionism and positive status quo have been adopted. There are only a few periods when strategic miscalculation or offensive realist strategic offensive by adversary states has led to full-scale risk-taking or risk-aversion to maintaining a negative status quo in Russia.

The territorial expansion of modern Russia sometimes embodies risk aversion, because it can compensate for the loss of its sphere of influence with European powers with relatively low-cost expansion gains in Central Asia and the Far East, giving Russia more strategic options. Faced with possible strategic overdraft risks after 1828, Russia chose to avoid rather than take them, because any further Russian expansion would risk foreign intervention and war with one or more other European powers, or the participation of other European powers in carving up the Ottoman Empire. The main strategic motivation of Nicholas I was to maintain a stable status quo. Both Alexander I and Nicholas I gave up the opportunity to weaken the Ottoman Empire in order to maintain the balance of the region. Russia hopes to keep the two straits of Turkey closed and maintain its status as a major power even when international conditions change. The Czar and many people in Russia felt fully confident in defending the values and interests of the country. Although the material balance of power is not conducive to Russia, its economic and military capabilities are gradually declining relative to other European powers. But Russia does not subjectively see itself as a declining power. The calculation of power in Russia is centered on the symbolic dimension of prestige. The defeat of the European Revolution from 1848 to 1849 made the czar more confident, thinking that he could rely on coercive diplomacy when dealing with Sudan. The Tsar believed that even if Britain intervened in Crimea, it would not prevent Russia's strategic layout. For Russia, the issue of sacred sites and reli-

gious protection symbolizes the relative ranking of major powers. For Russia, the issue of holy sites and religious protection symbolized the relative ranking of the great powers, a strategic cultural manifestation of the imperial complex.

The Crimean War made Russia shift its strategic focus to the Far East, and after the Russo-Japanese War, Russia shifted its strategic focus to Europe. Russia ultimately failed to assume the risk of strategic overdraft in the Crimean War, and then shifted its focus of expansion to Central Asia and the Far East. This caused a conflict of geopolitical and economic interests with the British Empire and Japan after the Meiji Restoration. Before the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Russia's military facilities in Lushun Port and other East Asian strategic fortresses, Russia showed contempt for Japan's proposal and did not hesitate to fight. Russia has always maintained an offensive and uncompromising stance. In the end, Russia was defeated and triggered a domestic revolution, resulting in a strategic overdraft. Russia regarded its own long-term window expectations relative to Japan as a short-term window, which accelerated the decision-making determination of war within a limited time. After the war, Russia showed a certain degree of strategic contraction, which opened up an era of cooperation between Russia and Japan, concluded a maritime trade treaty, and signed the principle of respecting each other's territorial integrity and opening its doors in North-east China [32, p. 324–328]. In countless crises, Russia often seems very promising to reach a reasonable solution and obtain a better arrangement than actual results. But it always would rather risk defeat than compromise. Russia's all-round expansion is sometimes carried out at the same time, but it is more common to go one after another. See which direction is the least risky, and then proceed to which direction.

The diplomatic thoughts formed since Peter the Great continued to the successive governments before the October Revolution. The diplomatic style of the Soviet Union still shows the style of Peter the Great from time to time. It is not difficult for people to see the 18th-century Russia's strategic cultural traditions from its diplomatic behaviors such as its territorial claims to neighboring countries, the chauvinistic acts of great powers that flagrantly invaded other countries with limited sovereignty. The post-Cold War Russia's strategic attitude to maintain the status quo was more forced by circumstances than by intentions [33, p. 46]. For at least four months after the October Revolution, Russia pursued a revolutionary foreign policy that was beyond its reach and was incompatible with the main conditions of the world despite its extremely weak national power. The Bolshevik party in Russia finally allowed the ideological passion to adapt to the objective environment. From 1917 to 1933, the Soviet Union was too weak to attack its opponents of great powers. After 1933, the Soviet Union tried to contain the surrounding threats: the Japanese Empire in Northeast Asia and Nazi Germany in Europe. During the Cold War, the United States and its allies decided to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding globally. This gave the Soviet Union few opportunities for expansion, but the Soviet Union still seized some opportunities for expansion. Among the rulers of Russia, there is a deep-rooted and long-lasting fear of the country being invaded. The best way to prevent invasion is to expand the territory. Before and after the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia's foreign policy was largely driven by the logic of realism. The Soviet Union's foreign policy behavior was mainly driven by relative power calculations, not by communist ideology. Every Soviet aggression is based on security-related reasons. Like the Tsarist Empire in history, the Soviet Union always tried to maximize its power in order to gain security in international competition [34, p. 205–214].

The Soviet Union's risk-taking is usually kept within the controllable range of strategic rationality. Even in the era when Stalin most championed collective security and the United Front, he always avoided the potential risks that might be brought about by any promise, in order to retain the option of another transaction after the start of the war. Stalin was extremely cautious. He would not covet and divide the spoils before the territory was conquered, nor would he enter the front line of conflicts designed by others. But he also has to keep room, so that if Britain is too weak, he still has a chance to share with Hitler, just as he later declared war on Japan at the end of the war in 1945, and received extremely high rewards. In November 1940, Hitler said to Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Mikhlaylovich Molotov: "You should have access to the warm ocean, and you will be like Iran and India in the future". Molotov later commented on this: "This is a visionary man who lacks a thorough understanding of Soviet policy, but he wants to take us to risk. If we are trapped in the south, his situation will be much easier. Once Britain wants to fight with us in combat, we have to rely on him. If you don't understand this, it would be too naïve" [35, p.8]. But Russia's strategic rational calculation of the risk appetite's prospects will also be misjudged: Stalin has resolved the two fronts facing Germany and Japan in launching an offensive strategy through the "Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty" and the "Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Treaty". For the risk of combat, the Soviet-German agreement won him two years, and the Soviet-Japanese treaty won him the defense of Moscow. Stalin underestimated the possible consequences of being tough and uncompromising, and overestimated the room he could play for reconciliation.

One of the bottom lines that Stalin insisted was that the Soviet army could not directly intervene in the war in any case. Reflects the Soviet Union's strategic caution in risk-taking. Stalin was unwilling to bet on the credibility of the Soviet Union in the developing world. He believes that these regions are too far away and too unstable, that their leaders are too difficult to control, and that the Soviet Union is not yet strong enough to engage in risky operations in far-flung regions, although of course his attitude may change over time as the Soviet military grows stronger. Although the weapons provided by the Soviet Union to Cuba were large in number and highly modernized, they were all defensive in nature, and the Soviet Union did not risk war for Cuba [36, p.250]. 1946 Iran Crisis; 1947 Greek Revolution; 1948 First Berlin Crisis and Czechoslovakia "February Incident"; 1950 Korean War; 1953 East Berlin Riots; 1956 Hungary Incident; 1958-1959 Second Berlin Crisis; U-2 Incident in 1960; Third Berlin Crisis in 1961; Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962; Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968; Ramadan War in 1973; Afghanistan War in 1979; Poland Crisis in 1981; etc. In any other age, among any other adversaries, these crisis events may sooner or later lead to war [37, p.302]. Similar to Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union always tried to create a course of action that could both deal with adversary threats and avoid war, but strategic adventures all ended in compromise due to complex motivations [38, p.380].

Like the Russian Empire in history, the Soviet Union sometimes chose to take risks rather than stop losses in time because of the massive investment in the early sunk costs. From 1964 to 1974, the Soviet Union always maintained its position as the largest aid country in Afghanistan. The more a country invests heavily in aid to another country, the more it cannot accept the latter's tendency to be centrifugal, and the more measures it must take to strengthen control. Regardless of whether it is engaged in high-level decision-making of the former Soviet Union or foreign propaganda afterwards, the dispatch of

troops to Afghanistan is not what many people in the West believe. According to the former Soviet Union's high-level decision-making and external propaganda after the event, sending troops to Afghanistan is not an offensive goal for Moscow to "go south to the Pacific Ocean and fight for the Persian Gulf" as many people in the West believe, but a defensive measure to maintain the pro-Soviet tendency of neighboring countries and ensure the national security of the Soviet Union.

From the 1970s to the early 1980s, the Soviet Union was pursuing a tough and rigid China policy, which was a reflection of its global strategic expansion. The Soviet Union's attempt to simultaneously gain advantages over all its strategic opponents, including China, resulted in severely intensified tension and confrontation in Sino-Soviet relations. This policy based on overestimating its own strategic potential and underestimating China's strategic potential has caused the Soviet Union to bear tremendous pressure on the Asian front. From the perspective of historical evolution, the collapse of the Soviet expansion strategy almost began here [39, p. 320–339]. From Tsarist Russia to later the Soviet Union, in order to achieve its goal of going south to the Indian Ocean, they tried to infiltrate and control Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is the inheritance of the strategy of the Tsarist Russian Empire. The invasion of Afghanistan was also a product of progressive strategy. This action is defensive, because failure to take action will affect the security of the Soviet Union, and it will also be regarded as a Soviet failure in the international arena; this action is offensive again, because meeting the needs of the Soviet Union means that it can suddenly change the balance of regional and even global strategic forces unilaterally. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was also affected by the sunk costs, because the Soviet Union has invested a lot in Afghanistan for a long time. If it loses control of Afghanistan, all the investment will be difficult to recover. In the latter part of the Cold War, China plunged the Soviet Union into an "alliance entrapment dilemma", and indirectly consumed the Soviet Union's national power by attacking Soviet alliance partners, thereby finally removing the Soviet threat [40]. The intelligence cooperation between China and the United States and the real reaction of the Soviet Union proved the Soviet Union's strategic dilemma, allowing China to understand the limits of the Soviet Union's military adventures against China and the limitations of threats, and actually affected China's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It can be seen that the Soviet Union's strategic risk or risk-taking determination is not enough [41].

Contemporary reflection of Russian strategic culture and reflections on Sino-Russian relations

Referring to the content of strategic cultural theory and historical review in this study, post-Cold War Russia still has some strategic cultural traditions inherited from imperial history, but it is more of an ideological field. Taking into account Russia's strategic rationality in strategic practice operations, it will not fall into comprehensive revisionism that is inconsistent with strategic cultural traditions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, although Russia had lost its superpower status and the original Soviet empire had disintegrated, Russia was hierarchical relative to its immediate neighbors and countries. In Brzezinski's view, there are two modes of empire. One is that the development of Western European countries is mainly stimulated by trade and the acquisition of precious minerals, and they have established super-strong transoceanic navigation capabilities. The

other is that the empire continued to grow through expansion into neighboring lands, a model that is emulated by the Russian Empire in modern times [42, p. 163]. Regarding Russia's insecurity at the geographic and cultural levels, Russia will seek limited strategic offensives to gain a favorable negotiating position, such as Russia's military deployment to Georgia in 2008, and strategic pressure on Ukraine since 2014, especially in 2022. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict reflects the strategic cultural traditions under its geopolitical dynamism. Russia's deployment of troops to Ukraine is mainly based on strategic defense rather than strategic offensive, which is determined by fear and motivation rooted in the shaping of strategic culture. The geopolitical considerations of Russia's strategic culture also mean that in geographical areas that are not conducive to the maintenance of its security position, Russia will conduct appropriate risk aversion based on its position of strength, while in areas related to core security interests, Russia is willing to take geopolitical risks to carry out. Power projection. The Ukraine region concerns Russia's strategic bottom line rather than its strategic limit. Russia will not make major concessions because of Western economic blockade, military assistance or its own weakness.

The geopolitical limitation that cannot be avoided in the practical application of Russian strategic culture is the limited carrying capacity of the Eurasian geo-space for the relative distribution of strategic forces. In the process of China's rise, Russia's rejuvenation, and the integration of the European Union, how to balance the needs of the two countries' national strength growth and the limited geopolitical resources is a common concern of the two countries. From the perspective of Russia's strategic cultural tradition, the emphasis on relative power status is an important manifestation of its geopolitical fear. History shows that only 2.5 strategic forces can be accommodated in the main location of Eurasia, that is, between 30° and 60° north latitude. That is to say, between the three strategic forces, there must be a living space that will be severely squeezed by the other two and thus a broken zone will appear. Few of the three forces in Europe, Russia, and China can expand to the level of 1.5 alone. China's over-expansion in any direction on the four sides will result in a corresponding squeeze in the other direction and a corresponding strategic contraction [43]. However, this geopolitical challenge is not a geographical fatalism. China adheres to a defensive strategic orientation in its strategic cultural tradition and will not deliberately compress Russia's geopolitical space. Prohibiting the military forces of hostile countries, especially big countries, from getting too close to border areas and maintaining a buffer area is not only to reduce security threats and enhance a sense of security, but also to be considered a symbol of the other side's friendly intentions [44, p. 2–32]. Russia and China, as the power of the east and west poles, will be neutralized to a certain extent in the middle zone. When Russia's power is strong, the intermediate powers in this region (such as Mongolia, etc.) will form a certain pressure on China in the south. On the contrary, after Russia's decline, these middle powers, for their own security, will voluntarily withdraw from the middle, to make it a buffer zone with the great powers of the Far East. During the Sino-Soviet friendship and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, not only Mongolia, but also the five Central Asian countries that are currently members of the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization" are buffer zones that Russia voluntarily introduced between Russia and China during the period of decline [45]. China's geopolitical appeal to the Central Asia region is mainly to avoid security threats that are not conducive to geo-economic exchanges, and it has no active goal of dominating the geopolitical order in the Central Asia region.

The evaluation of the strategic cultural dimension of Sino-Russian relations should be examined in a three-dimensional space composed of three axes of historical development, international comparison, and China's interests [46]. Space is an important element of Russian strategic theory, while time plays an important role in Chinese strategic theory. Judging from the current geopolitical game situation between China and Russia and the United States, China-Russia strategic stability and security cooperation can not only benefit the two countries, but also a necessary option for China's rise [47]. Regarding the path to achieve Sino-Russian strategic stability, limited by the length of this article, the author's point of view is: the two countries must not force each other to seek each other in areas where their strategic interests do not match, but must support each other strongly, only need to have strategic Seek consensus and consistent strategic action in areas of overlapping interest. In response to the global geostrategic offensive of the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy and NATO's eastward expansion, it is unlikely that China and Russia will form perfect interests in all geopolitical fields. Pursuing perfection will only sacrifice the considerable prospects for practical cooperation between the two countries. However, at least in the field of nuclear security, the two countries can carry out soft and limited hard checks and balances against the United States in breaking the nuclear balance of power and the anti-missile system, so as to enhance the space for geoeconomic cooperation between China and Russia. For the territorial disputes between China and the US allies, or the disputes between Russia and European countries for spheres of influence, the two countries can cooperate in enhancing resource extraction and strategic mobilization, and do not need to seek the same position on all major international issues. As two rising powers at the same time, China needs to draw beneficial elements from Russia's diplomatic tradition, especially the ingenious handling of multilateral diplomacy and other diplomatic means, and at the same time avoid unfavorable factors and reduce the diplomatic cost in the process of growing into a global power.

China and Russia should avoid too many ideological factors in the strategic cultural construction of the two countries towards each other. The friendship between the United States and Russia in the 19th century was rooted in profound geopolitical interests and realist logic of power politics. Neither side had the later "crusade" ideology of expansion to universalist values and the strategic motivation to change the structure of other countries' polities. An important symbol of the transformation of the United States and Russia from friends to enemies is Wilsonianism vs Leninism. This ideological collision has intensified the intensity of geopolitical conflict. The strategic stability of Sino-Russian relations should also follow this strategic logic, promoting the two countries to expand more dimensions of cooperation space on the basis of the strategic consensus on coping with the US geo-threat, and enhance the strategic stability mechanism including security, economy, culture, etc. At the strategic and cultural level, the two countries should conduct more exchanges and exchanges with China to enhance the understanding of each other's behavior patterns and positive prospects for cooperation. Putin's government rarely proposes "ism", and the political elite pursues a non-ideological line. After the Cold War, Russia attached great importance to the strategic management of the former Soviet Union, that is, limited, defensive, local-scale power projection in the political and economic fields in order to maintain relative influence. This is not only due to Russia's historical traditional concerns regarding Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia and other regions as strategic cultures, but also because Russia and Russia lack sufficient strategic strength and international legitimacy

to restore the geographic scope of the Soviet Empire or Tsarist Russia. Russia cares more about status quo interests than expansion interests. Given the objective geopolitical situation or the immature conditions to change the status quo of the existing security dilemma, Russia will indeed show certain territorial claims in its surrounding areas, but it will only follow limited revisionism and will not take high-risk actions.

Judging from the aforementioned geopolitical dynamics of Russia's strategic culture and its influence mechanism, although Russia's current concept of "Greater Eurasia" is more from an economic perspective, it aims to construct a development spaces that can maximize the use and play of Russia's potentials. It can be seen that its essence still reflects the geopolitical ambition [48]. Russia has always emphasized that Europe is the first and that it is a European civilization. Even after the Cold War, Russia's attitude towards Asian countries is basically "borrowing the east to control the west". Historically, the Sino-Russian (Soviet Union) alliance was mainly based on obvious external threats, rather than on the basis of interdependent economic and trade interests. Even today, in Sino-Russian relations, mutual support in security is more strategically based than friendly exchanges in economics, trade and culture. The dimension of Sino-Russian relations in the future depends not only on China's continuous release of goodwill and costly strategic signals to Russia in the process of its rise, but also on how Russia views the Sino-US strategic game and the positioning of Sino-Russian relations. China and Russia should avoid the formation of mirror reflections in the process of strategic interaction. For example, when China misinterprets Russia's strategic culture as a general revisionist expansionist tendency that does not have the color of security dilemma, it will exaggerate the Russian geo-threat. When Russia ignores China's defensive-oriented strategic culture since Zuo Zhuan, Sun Tzu's Art of War, and The Six Arts of War, which puts more emphasis on active defense rather than over-expansion, it will also misjudge China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative and the destiny of mankind Community promotion. China's handling of its strategic relationship with Russia is not for a momentary urgency, but to build a long-term geopolitical and strategic cultural coexistence and dialogue between the two countries, reduce the two countries' sense of fear of each other, and enhance the common maintenance of global strategic stability, providing responsible international public goods.

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