

Global Governance Wars: Genesis, Specifics and Significance



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Abstract. The modern era of political confrontation in the second half of the 20th –first half of the 21st century is characterized by the transition to the doctrine of global governance wars between conflicting States. The essence of this doctrine is to strengthen one's own governance system as much as possible and critically weaken the enemy's public administration system so that all the links of the state body cease to work effectively and cope with their tasks. The paper reveals the significance of governance wars on the example of the collapse of the USSR, which occurred without any direct military clash, but led to the loss of all strategic advantages for the Russian Federation, its successor. We put forward a structural model of global dominance, according to which governance depends on hard, soft, and smart power; we show that this understanding comes from generalizing J. Nye's concept of soft power. We define the specifics of governance wars: long duration, all-encompassing and uncompromising nature. The following tools and algorithms of modern governance wars are considered: promotion of own ideology; working with local elites; masks syndrome and conspiracy in political elites; control over the information space; color revolutions; proxy wars; destruction of medical sovereignty. We reveal the relationship between governance wars and governance cycles that imply fluctuations in the effectiveness of public administration system both within one country and between countries. We consider five levels of social phenomena: meta, mega, macro, meso and micro levels, and substantiate their two-way hierarchy, when higher-level processes determine the development vector for lower-level processes, and lower-level processes form the

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mechanisms for implementing higher-level processes. We show that in modern conditions this paradigm is gaining importance, preventing the formation of distorted cognitive patterns in relation to the driving forces of national development.

Key words: governance wars, USA, USSR, indirect action strategy, hybrid warfare, soft power, smart power.

Introduction

The emergence of nuclear weapons of mass destruction by the middle of the 20th century raised a serious barrier to a direct military clash between States possessing such weapons and urged them to revise approaches to geopolitical competition. Crude methods of military intimidation began to serve as an information background in the confrontation between powerful States, while its very methods became more subtle and sophisticated. In this regard, it is not surprising that the Second World War was followed by the Third World War between the USSR and the USA and their allies, which became known as the Cold War. From that moment on, the confrontation between the countries evolved into a clash of their governance systems, which suggests the emergence of a new phenomenon in foreign policy – governance wars.

The transition to information warfare was marked by the creation and enormous strengthening of various special services in countries around the world. The global system of espionage and political sabotage, disinformation and ideological pressure have become a common thing for the civilization in the 20th and 21st century. While traditional academic science (economics, political science and sociology) was turning a blind eye on the fact that governance wars had become not only a significant, but also a determining factor in the development of all countries. Today, when the next round of the West/Non-West confrontation and the US/Russia confrontation, this fact can no longer be denied. Thus, we are facing an urgent task to consider the genesis, features and significance of governance wars, as well as to determine their

impact on modern social knowledge. The aim of the research is to addressing this problem. The novelty of our approach lies in systematizing the facts and structuring them for subsequent use in the analysis of policy and political economy.

Governance wars: the essence and genesis

By the middle of the 20th century, two giant States, the USA and the USSR, had nuclear weapons, which completely transformed the military doctrines of leading countries. Based on modern interpretations, we can say that the third world war of a hybrid type, called the Cold War, began in 1949 (Balatsky, 2022). The very specifics of the new weapons, and then their number, made a direct military clash between the superpowers pointless: it led either to a global planetary catastrophe or to excessive damage from the war, which devalued the victory. From that moment on, it became clear that the war should be waged with the use of other methods.

A new war doctrine still implied the collapse and even destruction of the enemy State, but by other, indirect methods of influence. The focus shifted from purely military confrontation to economics, technology, ideology, and other competitive factors. These links of the rival country should be weakened as much as possible, which ensured victory in a new war. This approach marked the formation of the doctrine of *governance wars*, according to which the enemy's public administration system must be weakened critically so that all the links of the state body cease to work effectively and cope with their pressing tasks. In a broader interpretation, governance warfare is an improvement in the

organization of one's own society and the disorganization of the enemy's society. Since the actions of a certain State to weaken the enemy's governance system are transferred to the territory of another State, the governance war inherently becomes global; if such actions by the two giant countries affect many States (primarily allied ones), the global governance war becomes *worldwide*. The transition to this doctrine means the transfer of global competition to the field of governance – from now on, competition between the governance systems of the opposing countries came to the fore. Accordingly, in a new military-strategic clash, the country whose public administration system works better wins.

We recall that the Cold War began with the Soviet Union testing a nuclear bomb in 1949, and a year before that, Norbert Wiener's landmark book *Cybernetics* was published in the United States. The book proclaimed a new universal science – the science of control in technical, biological and social systems (Wiener, 1968). From that moment on, all special social and technical disciplines were subordinated to the main science – the science of control and governance. No wonder that the new worldview and the underlying philosophy have been placed at the forefront of the modernized U.S. geopolitical doctrine. It is this new analytical apparatus that has become the basis for the practice of conducting governance wars.

The essence of governance warfare is to *disable the governance subsystem of the enemy State and, conversely, to strengthen one's own governance subsystem*. The main imperative of governance warfare is extremely simple: to organize oneself (one's State) as effectively as possible and to disorganize the enemy (its State) as much as possible. From now on, it became unnecessary to physically destroy the rival's economy, it was enough to take control of or neutralize its centers of governance decision-making.

The new doctrine, which focuses on the conduct of war using the indirect approach, has been called the *strategy of indirect action* (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023). Governance wars emerged during the period of British imperial rule that was based on trade, deception and cunning (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023). The need for such art was linked to the need for the British establishment to control vast territories beyond the borders of the metropolis. In the second half of the 20th century, the United States, which began to transform into a global empire, brought the practice of governance wars to its logical conclusion. The philosophical basis for the new approach utilized by the American administration was an ancient treatise by the Chinese thinker Sun Tzu (Sun Tzu, 1950). The direct ideologist of U.S. special operations, including those carried out by the CIA, was Allen Dulles, who substantiated the principles of combining methods of counterintelligence, psychological warfare, deception, security and falsification (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023).

We emphasize that the strategy of governance wars (SGV) was originally formed in the United States, but was initiated by the country's confrontation with the Soviet Union. The latter, of course, also used SGV methods to one degree or another, but much less intensively and not so diversely. In other words, the initiative and advantage in new methods of struggle were originally on the side of the United States.

Today, the concept of *hybrid warfare* is widely used; it refers to a wide combination of economic, political and informational impact on the enemy, provided that opponents try to avoid open hostilities or transfer them to the territories of other countries; while all such actions imply a rejection of established legal and ethical norms (Khudokormov, 2024). There is also an expanded definition of hybrid warfare as the use of all available resources, technical, financial, and human, to win

in a clash between two sides (Sivkov, Sokolov, 2023, p. 13). However, it does not take into account that hybrid warfare should be understood as the use of all available resources (technical, financial, and human) except for nuclear weapons. As mentioned earlier, the latter element makes the war itself meaningless, because a large-scale nuclear conflict does not imply a winner. Nevertheless, today hybrid wars, depending on the presence of kinetic effects (physical violence), are divided into non-kinetic and kinetic. The former include information and psychological influence, trade and cyber wars, while the latter include “color revolutions” and participation in local military conflicts (Alaudinov, 2024a; Alaudinov, 2024b).

An important feature of hybrid warfare is that it is a *war of meanings and nerves* and aims to stupefy national elites and dehumanize the masses (Devyatov, 2020, p. 83). Accordingly, the task of the *war of meanings* is to destroy the culture of the enemy people – their traditional worldview, ethical and aesthetic coordinates, values, faith and other elements of the worldview. The task of the *war of nerves* is to achieve the fastest and most accurate reaction of one’s forces to control signals and, conversely, to slow down the enemy’s reaction due to apathy or exhausting destructive arousal (Devyatov, 2020, p. 159).

Based on the above, we can say that the strategy of indirect actions, the doctrine of hybrid wars and the concept of governance wars are equivalent in their essence, because in all cases the “blows” dealt by the enemy are embedded in the national economy and culture, violating their original format and the direction of the evolution of the State. At the same time, the concept of governance wars, in our opinion, is preferable, because in a more explicit form it highlights the main link of the clash (the subsystem of public administration) and the methods of geopolitical competition (non-military). In this case, the governance war has two dimensions –

internal and *external*. The internal dimension consists in the work of the public administration system within one’s own country in order to ensure its unhindered development and eliminate obstacles along the way; the external dimension consists in the work of the governance system on the territory of the enemy in order to destroy, disrupt or take control of its public administration system and hinder the development of its country.

In addition, we should highlight some differences in the above concepts. For example, the Cold War in the narrow sense of the word presupposes an arms race with all the ensuing consequences, which is much narrower than the concept of a governance war involving a wider range of confrontation. Hybrid wars, on the contrary, focus on damaging the enemy by non-standard methods, but they overlook the state of their own governance system. This once again confirms the great universality of the concept of governance wars.

The presence of internal and external dimensions in the phenomenon of governance wars highlights the *principle of consistency* (Balatsky, 2021; Balatsky and Yurevich, 2022), which requires consistency in setting technological, institutional and cultural factors in the implementation of national economic growth and development policies. In this context, its generalization looks like this: to achieve common success in the geopolitical struggle, it is important to achieve success in all particular areas. For example, success in the ideological field without material reinforcement does not have any impact by itself; achievements in the external sphere are ineffective without their equivalent in domestic politics. The example of the USSR demonstrates that the confrontation on the territory of the enemy was conducted quite satisfactorily by its leadership, but the accumulated mistakes in the country’s domestic policy did not allow winning the Cold War.

It is quite logical to emphasize once again the question of the legitimacy of the claim that governance wars emerge only in the 20th century, because the clash of public administration systems has occurred before. The fact is that before the Second World War, inclusive, all intelligence and sabotage actions of States already existed, but were mainly of an *auxiliary* nature, since the strength of weapons and the size of the army remained the *main* factor in winning the war. After the arrival of nuclear weapons, there was a fundamental casting in this process: large-scale reconnaissance and sabotage operations on enemy territory became the main factor in victory, and the military-strategic arsenal turned into a means of deterrence (intimidation) to neutralize a direct heated clash between the warring parties.

Significance of governance wars

The concept of governance wars was successfully applied by the United States of America against the USSR and at the same time became the standard approach to building relations with all unfriendly countries. It is the confrontation between the United States and the USSR in the Cold War and its outcome that make it possible to understand the significance of governance wars. To do this, let us look at the *Table*, which shows the ratios of countries in the context of key development indicators. Thus, the territorial potential is estimated by the area of the country's territory, the demographic potential by the number of its population, the economic potential by the volume of GDP, and the

technological potential by the volume of per capita GDP; the methodology of such analysis is described in (Balatsky, 2024).

The approach that uses GDP for measuring the potential of an economy and its capacity to function is widely criticized, which is reflected in a series of papers on this topic (Balassa, 1964; Kuznets, 1973; Stiglitz et al., 2009; Sapir, 2022). However, we still do not have a better alternative, so we will use traditional estimates of GDP at purchasing power parity. Given the conventionality of cross-country comparisons of GDP, it is advisable to treat the figures shown in the Table primarily as ordinal estimates.

The Table shows that by 1991 the Soviet Union had a strategic advantage over the United States in terms of territory and a slight advantage in demography; the United States, on the contrary, had a strategic advantage in technology and a noticeable, but not strategic, dominance in the economy. We recall that a strategic advantage is considered when the comparative index is greater than two (Balatsky, 2024). By now, Russia has retained an advantage only in terms of area, and this advantage is not strategic; as for all other indicators, the United States has a strategic advantage over Russia.

For convenience, let us average the country indices (the last row of the Table), which gives quite an expected result: by the time of its collapse the USSR had a slight advantage in total economic potential compared to the United States, while now Russia is noticeably inferior to its geopolitical rival.

Relative indicators of the potential of Russia/the USSR and the USA

Potential	USSR/USA (1989–1990)	Russia/USA (2020–2023)
Territorial	2.28	1.74
Demographic	1.18	0.44
Economic	0.51	0.17
Technological	0.43	0.44
Average value	1.1	0.7
Compiled according to: (Balatsky, 2024).		

Thus, as a result of the victory in the Cold War, the United States achieved a fundamental reformatting of the geopolitical balance of power and actually crushed its rival.

Speaking about the scale of the USSR's losses as a result of the Cold War, we can say that it has lost all its advantages almost forever, especially those of strategic importance. The collapse of the USSR led to the loss of 30% of its territory, and Russia was significantly shifted to the north. At the same time, the country lost very important southern lands where the demographic situation was much more favorable and living conditions much more preferable than in its northern regions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country was facing depopulation. From 1991 to 2009 the Russian Federation lost more than 6 million people and is still balancing around the regime of simple reproduction, not reaching the 150 million mark. As for the United States, its population increased by 80 million people in 1991–2021, which is absolutely unattainable for Russia in the foreseeable future. Regarding the military-strategic factor, the situation was even more tragic – Russia lost its foothold in the Warsaw Pact countries, and then withdrew its bases from other countries as well. The United States, on the contrary, has increased its military and strategic presence around the world, bringing the number of its military bases to 700 (Sachs, 2022); according to alternative but unofficial estimates, the number of American bases reaches 900–1,000 units.

Thus, the 1949–1991 governance war proved victorious for the United States and allowed it to achieve strategic goals: the USSR and its successor, Russia, lost their status as superpower with all the consequences that followed. However, the most important thing that the Third World (Cold) War

showed was that the most powerful geopolitical rival was defeated without a single shot, without an armed invasion and, consequently, without human casualties and catastrophic material destruction. It is this result that is the final and indisputable argument in favor of the effectiveness and expediency of governance wars.

However, these events do not exhaust the achievements of the United States during the Cold War. The dismemberment of the Soviet Union into 15 countries was only the first step, the second was their transformation into neocolonial States under the control of the U.S. administration. The localization of the Soviet Union's nuclear potential in Russia by the American establishment led to the automatic military and political incapacity of the remaining 14 countries. However, as subsequent events have shown, the Russian Federation's nuclear shield has already failed to ensure its political sovereignty – the country has been in colonial dependence on the United States for 31 years, until 2022¹. But that is not all: in 2022 it became clear that the previous war had not ended, and its logical conclusion should be the further dismemberment of Russia into “independent” States. Thus, governance wars can smoothly flow into each other, unnoticed by the population and even by political elites.

We should note that after the First World War, the Communists were able to rebuild the destroyed Russian Empire in the form of the USSR, which was further expanded and strengthened after the victory in the Second World War. After the defeat in the Third World (Cold) War, such a reconstruction of the country became impossible. Now Russia faces a less ambitious, but no less difficult task – to preserve its statehood in the face of total Western pressure.

¹ In recent years, one of the main leitmotifs of Vladimir Putin's official speeches has been the idea of the country gaining sovereignty. He said that “either the country is sovereign or it is a colony”; such explanations actually mean recognition of the fact that until 2022 Russia did not have full-fledged political sovereignty and was in neocolonial dependence (See: Adamovich O. (2022). “We don't want to be a colony”: Putin explained what Russia's independence is based on. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. June 9. Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27403/4600366/>). Of course, Russia was in a state of local rather than total neocolonial dependence, which, however, does not change the essence of the issue being raised.

The above is quite enough to illustrate the importance of the phenomenon of governance wars in the global world of the 20th and 21st century. Current events indicate that the role of this type of confrontation will only increase in the future.

Soft power as the core of governance wars

It would not be a mistake to assert that one of the central conceptual constructions of governance wars is the so-called “soft power” put forward by J. Nye. He understood it as the hegemony of the English language, Western culture, and the political leadership of the United States (Nye, 2014). Although the concept was widely criticized from the very beginning, with an emphasis on its vagueness and low verifiability, new interpretations and theories were born on its basis². In this regard, we will try to operationalize the concept of “soft power” in relation to governance wars while preserving its meaningful constructive nature.

In an attempt to structure and schematically display Nye’s views, we propose the following generalized formula for the global dominance of a State:

$$\underbrace{\left(\frac{\text{Global leadership}}{\text{Governance}} \right)}_{\text{Governance}} = \underbrace{\left(\frac{\text{Military might}}{\text{Hard power}} \right) + \left(\frac{\text{Economic might}}{\text{Hard power}} \right)}_{\text{Hard power}} + \underbrace{\left(\frac{\text{Country's image}}{\text{Soft power}} \right) + \left(\frac{\text{Network might}}{\text{Soft power}} \right)}_{\text{Soft power}} + \underbrace{\left(\frac{\text{Coordination of plans and actions}}{\text{Smart power}} \right)}_{\text{Smart power}} \quad (1)$$

In this formula, the country’s military and economic power play its part and should still be maximized to ensure strategic balance; but in addition, the so-called soft power comes into play, which means a positive image of a leading country with all the methods and ways to demonstrate this.

It has already been noted in the literature that the distinction between hard and soft power is quite conditional, and the tools of “soft power”, when

being forced, can evolve into “hard power” (Lebedeva, 2017). Nye himself also said that in addition to the targeted formation of an attractive image of a hegemon country (actually soft power), there is a complex system of horizontal (network) connections that extends beyond national States (the activities of hackers, the media, national diasporas, terrorist organizations, offshore companies, banks, special services, etc.). This factor has also become an important element of soft power, and mastering it is a separate and very difficult professional competence. This element is included in formula (1) as a component of soft power, but the country’s network power tends to turn into hard power and often becomes an independent phenomenon for the use of “network-centric warfare” (Cebrowski, Garstka, 1988); there are already assessments and conclusions regarding the practice of network-centric operations, for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq (Arzumanyan, 2008).

As already noted, forcing the propaganda of one’s own country and its advantages, the increased pushing of certain ideas turns soft power into hard power. In this sense, Nye said that soft power is devoid of ethical content, and therefore can be used both for evil and for good: “Twisting minds is not necessarily better than twisting arms”, (Nye, 2014, p. 148). This circumstance once again underlines the combat aspect of soft power methods and governance wars.

Hereafter, the ability of soft power to smoothly transform into hard power will be called the ambivalence of soft power. Considering that hard actions provoke resistance from the countries against which they are carried out, scientific discourse produced another concept, smart power, which means the ability to subtly combine resources and an action plan in conditions of the dispersion of the total potential of the hegemon country and the “rise of the rest” (Nye, 2014, p. 338). In fact, we are talking about the ruling elite’s ability to abandon redundant goals and objectives in favor of truly important and

² Ageeva V.D. (2016). The role of “soft power” instruments in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the context of globalization: Candidate of Sciences (Politics) dissertation. Saint Petersburg: Saint Petersburg State University.

urgent ones. From a methodological point of view, the principle of smart power is the political science equivalent of the principle of coherence, which requires effective coordination and synchronization of governance efforts in all areas. For example, hard actions in the field of soft power, even with a powerful military and economic potential, can lead to a country losing its international prestige and influence. The importance of smart power as an element of governance wars is reflected in formula (1).

Most experts say that the USA lost its privileged positions and authority because it had failed to use smart power (Brzeziński, 2007), largely due to the conflict between the need for the leader State to abandon its previous ambitions and claims and the unwillingness of the political establishment to make such concessions.

Among other things, formula (1) provides a convenient tool for understanding and diagnosing the process of waning influence of large imperial entities. For example, during the late Soviet period, ideological work ceased to produce positive results due to outright failures in the economic sphere; successful subversive activities by U.S. agents of influence in the Soviet Union became effective due to the already existing negative sentiments of the local population. Even the military might of the USSR by itself could no longer prevent the collapse of the positive image of the State; therefore, the subversive network work of foreign agents received support even among the country's political elites.

Specifics of modern governance wars

It would be naive to believe that governance wars emerged only in the 20th century. They have been going on in one form or another, but the maturity of such wars was insufficient to distinguish them as a specific form of geopolitical clashes. Today, the situation has changed and governance wars have become a complex and large-scale phenomenon. Let us consider their typical features without going into detail.

1. Totality. Governance wars are essentially total confrontations. Many authors point out that the mentality of the American establishment and the entire model of U.S. global dominance adhere to the doctrine of intransigence that implies uncompromising political attitude toward maintaining cultural homogeneity and “purging” all objectionable social elements (Balatsky, 2024). This means *waging war by any means necessary and rejecting any ethical and legal restrictions*. At the same time, the confrontation itself permeates all parts of the social system, even those that may seem insignificant.

We should note that the rejection of ethical constraints in governance wars is coupled with the development of alternative ethical attitudes that refute traditional norms. Moreover, when pursuing a policy of global dominance, new norms become mandatory not only for the hegemon country, but also for its allies.

Perhaps the most striking and famous example of the considered principle of totality is the case that occurred on August 20, 2024 in Hong Kong, when retired Taiwanese General Tsang You-hsia committed a serious offense — he stood up and stood at attention during the performance of the national anthem of the People's Republic of China³. This action is an offense in accordance with the law governing relations between the people of Taiwan and mainland China, and therefore the Ministry of Defense of Taiwan, together with the Council of Mainland China Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, found Tsang guilty of violating Article 9-3 of the law. According to this article, high-ranking officials and former officials, such as generals and deputy ministers, may not participate in any ceremonies or events held by political parties, military, administrative or political bodies (institutions) or organizations of

³ See <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2024/10/16/2003825371>

the mainland, which in turn harm national dignity; the conduct detrimental to Taiwan's national dignity includes saluting the flag or emblems, singing anthems, or any other similar behavior symbolizing mainland China's political power. In this regard, the Ministry of Defense of Taiwan decided to reduce the pension of the retired general by 75% over the next five years after he was found guilty; the punishment for such misconduct involves the deprivation of the pension in the amount of 50 to 100%.

The above example clearly demonstrates the internal network of legal and moral norms that prevent the recognition of the sovereignty of the opposing country. We recall that Taiwan is a strategic partner of the United States in the region; thus, such norms exist in the region. It is the internal norms of a country that allow it to *consolidate* its population and win global wars. Earlier examples of the totality of governance decisions are provided by the United States from the early period of its existence. According to the latest data, from 1600 to 1900, the colonists exterminated about 3 million Indians; the colonists also exterminated 60 million bison so that to deprive the natives of the basics of their existence. Quakers – white representatives of the so-called Religious Society of Friends – were also systematically exterminated. They were hung to the deafening roar of drums in order to prevent those present from hearing the last words of the convicts trying to explain the meaning of their teachings. European competitors like the Dutch and Swedish colonists were also exterminated along with the indigenous peoples. During World War II, not only the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was carried out, but even before that 110,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese origin were sent to concentration camps inside the country⁴.

⁴ *Amerika protiv vseh. Geopolitika, gosudarstvennost' i global'naya rol' SShA: istoriya i sovremennost'* [America against All. Geopolitics, Statehood, and the Global Role of the United States: History and Modernity]. Moscow: Sodruzhestvo kul'tur, 2023.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine led to the fact that the Russian language as well as Russian culture in all its forms was banned in the latter. This step is also typical for governance wars – otherwise the nation will be too “loose”, i.e. not fully consolidated to confront an external enemy.

Thus, victory in the governance war is ensured everywhere – absolutely in all areas of the social system due to the total consolidation of internal forces.

The very fact of the rejection of ethical and legal norms in the framework of governance wars has already received a certain theoretical understanding that can be summarized with the help of the works of N. Taleb and F. Fukuyama. Thus, Taleb substantiated the thesis of the locality of ethics, and Fukuyama – the locality of trust. This leads to the introduction of the concept of the *radius of ethics (trust)*. The general ideological substantiation for the denial of ethics and law in governance wars boils down to two consistently applied theses. The first one is the *primacy of ethics before the law*, according to which “the ethical is always more robust than the legal. Over time, it is the legal that should converge to the ethical, never the reverse... laws come and go, ethics stay” (Taleb, 2018, p. 90). Thus, the ethical justification of certain unsightly actions automatically ensures their legitimacy. The second thesis is the *locality of the phenomenon of ethics*, according to which “ethics is essentially a local phenomenon” (Taleb, 2018, p. 98). A person assumes certain ethical obligations toward others only if this person identifies themselves and these people as representatives of the same social group; otherwise, ethical norms become meaningless. This principle presupposes the division of humanity into *us* and *them*; then ethical standards apply to “us”, but they do not apply to “them”. Depending on the context, strangers can be other peoples, animals, political enemies, neighbors, etc. A typical example of this is the Japanese and Germans: the two nations

are characterized by a high culture of cooperation and mutual assistance, but they showed striking cruelty toward other peoples during the Second World War. The reason, according to Fukuyama, is simple: Germans and the Japanese do not perceive other peoples as their equals; therefore, the same ethical principles do not apply to them as to their compatriots (Fukuyama, 2006). In conditions of acute political confrontation between States, the phenomenon of locality of ethics is particularly pronounced.

2. Duration. This issue has already been raised in (Balatsky, 2022). So, while the First and Second world wars lasted four and six years, respectively, the Third (Cold) War lasted 42 years (1949–1991). Such a long period is determined by the very nature of governance wars. It is always a difficult struggle for the position in the future with long-term goals, cascades of successes and failures. Only after a long time, the achievements and mistakes that have accumulated finally tip the scales in one direction or another, when the enemy's public administration system reaches a critical point of ineffectiveness. We can say that governance wars are modern wars aimed *to deplete the enemy's resources*. To wage such wars, many special official and unofficial organizations are being created aimed at disrupting the enemy's control system. The advantage in waging such wars is on the side of the leading countries, which already have an extensive international network of special representative offices and have many years of experience in conducting such operations.

Currently, the Fourth World War between Russia and the United States has unfolded; it started in 2014, and entered a hot phase in 2022 (Balatsky, 2022). At the same time, the very course of the special military operation in Ukraine indicates its long-term nature. For example, it was only in the third year of the military clash that Ukraine transferred active military operations to the territory of Russia, which showed, first, the unpredictability

of the course of hostilities and had a painful effect on the population of the attacked regions, and second, caused image damage to the Russian Federation and contributed to the strategic undermining of the economic situation of its border regions – the Bryansk, Belgorod, Kursk and other regions. Such decisions are fundamentally long-term and designed to cause system-wide discontent among the Russian population with the very fact of military confrontation. At the same time, Russia's success in coping with the effects of international sanctions over three years has become an unpleasant surprise to the West. However, no one expected that the issue would be finally resolved within 2–3 years. For example, in Russia, 11 regions border on unfriendly countries and were previously considered favorable for living, but due to geopolitical instability they are beginning to lose their attractiveness (Kazantsev, 2024). Such processes not only undermine the country's power, but also cause destructive movements of resources within it: the final outcome of the unfolding governance war is postponed, at least to the end of the second decade of the war after its beginning – by 2032.

3. Uncompromising nature. Although governance wars use subtle and even delicate tools, their action is characterized by extreme harshness, which is typical for all wars. The above examples have already partially demonstrated the uncompromising nature of the emerging confrontations, but among other things, it manifests itself in the following principle: *in peacetime, the logic of capital (economic benefit) is higher than any other logic and even all human values; in war, the logic of destroying the enemy (military benefit) becomes higher than economic logic*.

The manifestations of this principle are very diverse. For example, trade (tariff) wars between the United States and China cause economic damage to the United States itself, but it recedes into the background, because the first priority is to prevent the domination of the enemy. The huge

costs incurred by European countries due to the disruption of cheap energy supplies from Russia are also considered acceptable, because the main task in the outbreak of war is to weaken the Russian public administration system. Moreover, the United States is ready to wage a governance war with Russia in Ukraine “to the last Ukrainian”⁵. As for Germany, the United States not only allows the bankruptcy of its industrial sector due to the lack of cheap energy resources, but also promotes the relocation of German enterprises to its territory. It is noteworthy that Germany, being a satellite of the United States, fully accepts this position. The main rule is extremely simple: *everything that prevents a victory in a geopolitical confrontation is sacrificed*, including the well-being of the allied countries. For the same reason, the internal social space of the country is being ruthlessly “cleansed” of any hostile elements.

Among other things, the uncompromising nature of governance wars, as already mentioned, implies the rejection of *moral* and *legal norms*. This principle was projected into the sphere of governance directly from the activities of the secret services. In this regard, we agree with Gert Buchheit, who said: “One can argue whether there are binding professional morals or some international contractual principles in the field of secret services. In practice, it all boils down to a fairly wide set of very arbitrary “rules of the game” – both decent and shameless – and various ways to complete tasks, both direct and roundabout. And which tracks a particular secret service is moving along largely depends on the person who runs it” (Buchheit, 2024). This makes it possible to reasonably assert that the essence and ideology of governance wars were developed in the secret services, and then gradually transferred to the entire system of public administration.

Tools and algorithms of modern governance wars

The main leitmotiv of governance wars is the struggle for people’s minds. Indeed, once the mind has given up, the body can no longer resist. In this regard, the set of methods of governance wars is conditioned by the need to take control of the consciousness of the enemy’s elites and masses. Over the last century, these methods have been crystallized and improved. Let us briefly consider some of them.

1. Promoting own ideology. *Ideological struggle* is an integral element of governance wars, when the ideology of the winner replaces the ideology of the loser. To understand the essence of the phenomenon under consideration, we will use the following definition: “Ideology is a system of ideas about the world and value-based and semantic paradigms that dominates in a certain community, promoting and directing the life of its members” (Volkonsky, 2024, p. 44). The enemy’s ideology must penetrate not only the local elite, but also the general population. The psychological meaning of this is clear: if you share the ideology of your enemy, then he is no longer your enemy. Thus, the replacement of ideology eliminates the internal resistance of the population and the elites of the opposing State. Moreover, the replacement itself occurs step-by-step: first, an intellectually formalized ideology wins as a kind of ideological stem or core of a new worldview, and then the entire deep ideology, which absorbs cultural codes and traditions, is replaced (Volkonsky, 2024). With such an ideological inversion, the former nation ceases to exist.

Spreading own ideology to the enemy’s territory is aimed at creating an ideologically (mentally) homogeneous space that is not capable of generating the very idea of confrontation and war. An example of such a course of events is the Constitution imposed on Russia by the United States after the victory over the USSR. The document still contains Paragraph 1 of Article 13: “Ideological diversity

⁵ See: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/22/06/2023/649435bb9a7947f12d69326b?ysclid=m2j0w60w9924983719>

shall be recognized in the Russian Federation”⁶. In fact, it means there is no official state ideology, which is social nonsense. As some researchers rightly point out, “there is always an ideology, but its quality can vary from advanced ... to degrading” (Shekhovtsov, 2024, p. 32). In physics there is a saying: nature abhors a vacuum. Economists have a similar saying: society does not live in an ideological vacuum. As soon as ideological voids form, they are immediately filled by third-party and, as a rule, hostile ideologemes. Of course, a country acting as a hegemon or at least a technological leader has serious advantages in promoting its ideology in the enemy’s camp, because everyday logic turns out to be on the leader’s side: the ideology is more correct where it is better to live. The point of replacing ideology is that in this case the masses and elites are deprived of social activity, and their energy is directed away from the interests of their own country.

At the moment, the President of the Russian Federation adheres to the norm of Paragraph 1 of Article 13 of the Constitution. In his opinion, the Soviet Union had a dominant ideology, but its presence did not prevent the country from collapsing⁷. However, the mistake of such a judgment is that the presence of ideology in a governance war is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for victory. Propaganda slogans and calls for a better life cannot ensure victory in a war unless they are supported by economic and technological advances. However, it does not follow that in the context of a geopolitical confrontation, a country can survive without a solid ideological base. The presence of many ideologies provokes and at the same time legitimizes their struggle, which can

lead to the disavowal of the country’s history and culture, which was done in Russia after 1991. The struggle of ideologies is closely intertwined with the modern possibilities of disinformation.

We should note that the state ideology is not limited to the ideological discourse of the State, but defines it. For example, the presence/absence of the right of a civil servant to have real estate and money accounts abroad in Russia today is determined operationally, but not formalized constitutionally. For a long time, this right was not limited in Russia, but it was eliminated at a certain point. However, this norm is not reflected in the code of state ideology, leading to institutional uncertainty arises. Such examples are numerous, thus the need for the manifestation of basic values at the level of state ideology. The “falling out” of such institutional norms from the constitution creates the ground for double standards and dilution of the effectiveness of the public administration system.

2. Working with local elites. The main task of the governance war is to take control over the governance system of the enemy country. This is directly achieved by forming local elites, loyal to and controlled by own political elite, on the enemy’s territory. The arsenal of means to achieve this goal is quite wide – recruitment, conversion, bribery, ideological and educational training of current and future government representatives based on own interests and ideologies. Strategically, this task evolves into the task of turning local elites into supranational elites that are no longer connected with the strategic interests of their country and its population. All progressive initiatives and projects are blocked through the comprador elites. For example, in Russia, the appointment of Anatoly Chubais to the post of head of the state corporation Rusnano froze the creation of the country’s own modern production of microchips. Similar processes took place in the civil aircraft industry; by 2023, the domestic

⁶ For this and subsequent references to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, see: <http://duma.gov.ru/legislative/documents/constitution/>

⁷ See: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/06/2024/6663275c9a79472d5adec23d>

public sector provided only 2.4% of the industry's products in the pharmaceutical industry, while the share of imported components in the domestic production of pharmaceutical substances was about 80% (India, China, and European countries) (Gusev, Yurevich, 2023).

Blocking the creation of high-tech industries by local elites has far-reaching consequences. The absence of such industries makes the domestic advanced science unclaimed, and this, in turn, makes it pointless to train skilled personnel. Sometimes the lack of demand from the authorities for high technology can be "overcome" by the so-called J.-B. Say's law, according to which supply creates its own demand. However, the very control of the supply factor by the comprador elites prevents the operation of Say's law and does not allow the situation to be reversed.

We should note that in the 20th century the United States developed and applied a three-step algorithm for creating puppet governments.

At the first stage, consulting firms are sent to the country that needs to be involved in the orbit of U.S. influence. Their employees contact high-ranking officials of the country in order to convince them to take a loan from international banks for the development of the national economy in such a way that the country would not be able to repay it later. Economic consultants, or so-called *economic hit men* (EHMs), brainwash local elites by feeding them deliberately false data and inflated forecasts of economic development based on the most advanced methods and models. If it is possible to drive the country into a debt trap, then it falls into economic and political dependence and finds itself embedded in the imperial circle of American corporations. An example of the successful work of EHMs is Saudi Arabia in the mid-1970s, which used its petrodollars to purchase U.S. government securities and pledged to reinvest the interest earned by these securities to pay for the services of American construction companies (Perkins, 2005).

If the work of EHMs did not produce the desired result, as in Panama and Ecuador, for example, then the *second stage* was launched, at which local opposition forces are provoked to participate in revolutions and political coups in order to establish a puppet government; or the CIA-sanctioned agents, "jackals", step in to physically eliminate political figures objectionable to the United States. An example of the successful work of the "jackals" include the assassinations in 1981 of Ecuadorian President Jaime Roldós, who defended the law on hydrocarbons that was "dangerous" for the United States, and Panamanian President Omar Torrijos, who refused to renegotiate the agreement on the Panama Canal, which was unfavorable for the United States (Perkins, 2005).

If the "jackals" failed to do their job, as was the case in Venezuela and Iraq, then the *third stage* was launched – an armed invasion of the U.S. army into the territory of an unfriendly country with all the ensuing consequences. The Iraq war of 2003 is a classic example of a successful operation of this kind; Vietnam is a textbook example of the failure of U.S. military intervention (Perkins, 2005).

The three-stage model used by the United States of America to gain control over unfriendly countries and their governments has been called *global institutional traps*, because the countries that fall into these traps function extremely ineffectively and find it extremely difficult to get out of such a regime (Balatsky, 2006).

3. The masks syndrome and conspiracy in political elites. The deepening of the hegemon country's work with the elites of non-sovereign States led to the emergence of the *masks syndrome* in political circles and its wide dissemination in the 21st century. Gradually, major independent political thinkers and strategists have left the scene, and now more and more grotesque figures appear as state leaders. Top European officials receive instructions from the United States and are told what to do; it becomes less and less clear who acts as behind-

the-scenes advisers and whose interests underlie the decisions made. Here are some of many examples. At the Yalta European Strategy 2024 forum, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis called on the West to start a war with the Russian Federation⁸, and Danish Colonel Peter Nielsen, commander of NATO forces in Lithuania, also called on society to prepare for war with Russia⁹. All Western media outlets are filled with such irresponsible statements.

At the same time, the pandemic of political masks has engulfed the United States itself – its ex-president Joseph Biden was constantly making ridiculous statements and acting weird. Thus, the clarity in understanding who bears the general responsibility for the policies and decisions taken has completely disappeared. This means that the subject of governance of nation States is being blurred; therefore, the public administration system itself is becoming more conspiratorial and less effective, and the governance process itself is being curtailed and replaced by some kind of imitation action. On the one hand, thanks to this policy, the United States has gained unprecedented power over the countries under its patronage; on the other hand, the global political system is losing its understandable checks and balances, thereby opening the way to behind-the-scenes actions and fatal mistakes that accompany them.

The masks syndrome and conspiracy in political elites in the 20th century was supported by the process of fragmentation of countries. Suffice it to say that before the Second World War there were about 50 countries in the world, and now (along with the unrecognized ones) there are more than 250 (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023). After

the collapse of the USSR, 15 pseudo-sovereign States were formed instead; Abkhazia and South Ossetia separated from Georgia a little later, and Transnistria has been in the process of separating from Moldova for many years (just as Kosovo has been trying to achieve independence from Serbia). There are many such examples. The meaning of such divisions is simple: the smaller the country, the smaller its political ambitions, including its own political sovereignty.

4. Control over the information space. Already in the 20th century, the information space turned into an arena of political clashes. Suffice it to recall that Moscow Radio, which was broadcasting abroad, was launched in 1929, while the Voice of America radio station was established only 12 years later (Khudokormov, 2024). However, after World War II, American strategists developed long-term programs of cultural and intellectual influence on the elites of other countries. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, with offices in 35 countries, dozens of publications and programs, became the main tool of the cultural front of the Cold War. Numerous publications, symposiums, exhibitions, concerts, and Congress programs were supposed to convince Europeans that “America and Americans have achieved mature triumphs in all the spheres of the human spirit common to both the Old and the New Worlds” (Saunders, 2020, p. 4). To conceal the funding and participation in such activities, the CIA created an extensive system of funds, which served as money channels. This system has allowed the CIA to finance an unlimited number of covert programs against youth groups, trade unions, universities, publishing houses, and other organizations since the early 1950s. The scale of this activity is impressive in all respects (Saunders, 2020). Given that this propaganda with elements of disinformation has been conducted for more than 70 years, it is not surprising that the United States today has solid support around the world.

⁸ See: <https://mosregtoday.ru/news/power/litva-ofitsialno-prizvala-zapad-nachat-voynu-s-rossiej/>

⁹ See: <https://www.ritmeurasia.ru/news--2023-11-12--rashrabrilsja-komandujuschij-silami-nato-v-litve-prizyvaet-gotovitsja-k-vojne-s-rossiej-69801>

However, in the 21st century, the scale of information warfare has reached its peak. In recent decades, the United States has mastered a new information market tool – the construction and dissemination of narratives containing deliberate distortions or even outright lies. Such signals can take the form of fake news, unreliable expert opinions, outdated cognitive models, etc. Moreover, there are studies confirming that unreliable narratives spread much faster and more widely than reliable ones (Volchik, 2023). The problem is that false narratives, almost instantly capturing huge masses of people, form a distorted or fundamentally incorrect picture of the world. As the leader of the global information market, the United States has long been a leader in the production of fake news and narratives. Moreover, this practice is successfully automated, creating the effect of “invisible manipulation” in the global information environment. Thus, according to available data, in 2017 alone, bots generated more than 50% of all global Internet traffic (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023). In such a situation, the hegemon State has the opportunity to form a biased opinion about any participant in the geopolitical space. This creates a very subjective “axis of evil” that includes countries unfriendly to the United States; in this vein, Russia, Iran and North Korea are being demonized today.

Of course, U.S. information sabotage not always proves successful. Thus, Washington’s attempts to accuse the Syrian leadership of using chemical weapons, which took place from 2013 to 2018, were unsuccessful due to Russia’s active opposition. Thus, successes and failures in this field reflect the vigilance of the governance systems of participants in the global geopolitical space.

5. Color revolutions. The deepening of work with the elites is logically followed by the so-called *color revolutions*, proposed by Gene Sharp. The essence of the concept lies in organizing subversive actions in a potentially hostile country with the help of a large number of “small non-violent” acts

of civil disobedience, which should result in the destruction of the existing system of power and the change of the political regime (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023).

The above is a three-step algorithm for creating puppet governments, where the second step consists in overthrowing the local regime by physically eliminating independent political leaders of a hostile country. However, the concept of the color revolution allows taking an alternative path at the second stage – organizing protests from below to overthrow the current government and replace it with a puppet cabinet. In this direction, financial crises were purposefully created in countries unfriendly to the United States – Argentina (1982 and 2001), Mexico (1992), Russia (1998), etc. In the same vein, in 1972, Washington developed a doctrine of financial sabotage, the “shock doctrine”, which is a specific algorithm of actions to destroy the political, social and economic system of a country. For the first time, the United States implemented it in Chile after the military coup led by the CIA in September 1973 (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023). Subsequently, the overthrow of the current government by the color revolution method was effectively implemented by the American special services in a number of countries: the GDR, Hungary and Romania (1989), Georgia (1995), Serbia (2000), Ukraine (2004 and 2014), Kyrgyzstan (2005 and 2010). Sometimes such attempts were unsuccessful: in China and Georgia (1989), Mongolia and Armenia (2008), Moldova (2009), Belarus (2006 and 2020) and Russia. However, these failures are perceived by the American establishment as temporary and do not affect its willingness to use the tool of color revolutions further.

The events in Yugoslavia (Serbia) give an idea of the sequence of the color revolutions. At first, in the early 1990s, extensive economic sanctions were imposed on the country, which led to a drop in living standards, but did not undermine Milošević’s rating. Against this background, work began with

the opposition, the recruitment of the political and power elite. According to reports, in the year 2000 preceding the elections in Yugoslavia, opposition parties received \$35 million, opposition media received \$6 million from the European Union and \$9 million from Germany (Khudokormov, 2024). Due to the fact that the opposition lacked a single candidate who could be opposed to S. Milošević, an expensive study of public opinion was conducted by order of the American National Democratic Institute for International Affairs; the results of the study revealed the leader of a small party, V. Koštunica, unknown to the general public. Since 1999, subversive work with youth organizations has begun. Thus, the Resistance movement, which resembled an interest group back in 1998, received funding and support from the United States the following year; as a result, by 2000, the organization already had 130 regional branches and 70,000 members (Khudokormov, 2024). All this and the organized coup d'état in the elections led to the fall of the Milošević regime. Thus, over the past few years, foreign curators from the United States have managed to unite the disparate opposition, turn passionate youth against the government, paralyze the power bloc of the State, oust the current administration and create a puppet government.

In 2025, the arrival of the Donald Trump administration in the United States provoked a political scandal with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whose fate was in doubt. In fact, this meant that the U.S. administration recognized the illegitimacy of this organization and revealed its secrets, which, while promoting American values around the world, conducted not so much humanitarian as subversive political activities, directly interfering in the internal affairs of other States. As an independent agency, USAID was not part of the structure of ministries and the U.S. Department of State, but successfully distributed about \$ 40 billion a year to various political programs in the form of non-refundable

grants, technical means, goods and services; the agency owned a network of about 100 regional missions. USAID has become the culmination in the formation of an institutional instrument of U.S. soft power outside the country. Throughout its existence, USAID has worked closely with the CIA, and in relation to Russia it has funded the work of experts involved in drafting the country's Constitution, Civil, Tax, and Land codes, reforming the judicial system, organizing experience exchange programs for officials, and others¹⁰.

6. Proxy wars. As mentioned earlier, military invasion of a hostile country is the third step in the three-step algorithm for creating puppet governments. As a rule, the States subjected to such aggression by the United States were not qualified as the primary enemies of the hegemon; rather, they were perceived as the infrastructure of the main rival. Thus, a *proxy war* is unleashed on the territory of third countries, while the main parties to the conflict are, as a rule, two superpowers, a direct clash between which is considered impossible. So, already in the 20th century, Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan became the territories of proxy wars between the USA and the USSR. After 1991, when the world turned from a bipolar to a monocentric one, proxy wars became more commonplace, when a hegemon country could "restore order" on unfriendly territory at will. Libya, Iraq and Syria have been targeted by such campaigns. A return to the classic proxy war occurred in 2022 when Russia and the United States clashed on the territory of Ukraine¹¹.

¹⁰ See: The USAID Foreign Aid Agency is closing in the United States. What we need to know. *Izvestia*, 2025, February 4. Available at: <https://iz.ru/1833382/2025-02-04/v-ssha-zakryvaetsia-agentstvo-inostranoi-pomoshchi-usaid-chto-nuzhno-znat>

¹¹ The period of "pure" monocentrism led by the United States ended around 2014, after which a phase of geopolitical turbulence began with a characteristic weakening of the position of the hegemon and the entry of new global players onto the political scene: China, India, Russia, Iran, etc. — with expressed self-interests. However, during this period, the United States continued to play the role of conductor of a geopolitical symphony with many musicians.

The peculiarity of the conflict in Ukraine is that the combat zone borders directly on the territory of Russia, which is why hostilities are constantly moving to the territory of the main participant in the conflict. The United States has a huge advantage in this proxy war due to its distance from the combat zone. At the same time, the proxy war in Ukraine itself began after many years of ideological and organizational conversion of its elites and population against Russia, effectively becoming the third stage of the algorithm for creating puppet governments, which was implemented after the first two stages were fully completed.

The nature of proxy warfare also relies on long and very serious training in the first two stages of the specified algorithm. For example, one of the tools of the United States in Iraq was the bribery of Republican Guard generals who ordered their subordinates to stop resisting. Moreover, bribes to the Iraqi high-ranking military were transferred even before the start of hostilities. This policy allowed the United States and its allies to achieve victory with minimal losses, although the Iraqi army was superior in many respects (Lukyanovich, Silvestrov, 2023).

We should note that modern proxy wars are a truly subtle tool. For example, there is still no clear distinction between proxy warfare and covert operations carried out by an external party without being directly involved in the war (Chanysheva, 2023). In addition, proxy wars are taking place against the background of information wars, in the process of which various narratives are being formed, setting different positions of the warring parties. For example, in American discourse, the mega narrative regarding proxy wars is defined by two polar pairs: *war of choice / war of necessity*; *just war / unjust war* (Chanysheva, 2023). In this gradation, the U.S. war against Iraq is a just war by necessity, since it defended the Americans, their allies and the interests of the country. Russia's war

in Ukraine, on the contrary, is portrayed as a war of choice, unjust and unfair, and therefore Russia is responsible for it (Chanysheva, 2023).

7. Destruction of medical sovereignty. The beginning of the 21st century witnessed a new facet of governance wars — depriving the opposing country of medical sovereignty, which is understood as the problem of the dependence of national elite groups on foreign medicine (Gusev, Khudokormov, 2024). There are many cases of medical care provided to foreign government leaders outside their countries in 2010–2022. Moreover, in relation to Russia, the stories of medical pressure on representatives of the political elite have been revealed, showing personal vulnerability of those who have become dependent on foreign drugs and therapies. This applies to federal politicians, heads of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, major businesspeople, celebrities, and professional athletes¹².

In this case, the work of U.S. special services is being observed to block such a sensitive channel as medical care, and the doctrine of intransigence, which implies the rejection of ethical and legal restrictions, is being implemented.

As part of this trend, there are also “external influences” that cause problems in the health sector of the nation. A typical example of such actions is the new opium wars between China and the United States. For example, the U.S. authorities accuse Beijing of directly subsidizing the production and

¹² The most famous case is that of a Russian statesman, former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who suffered from liver cancer and underwent surgery in Milan in 2014. Subsequently, it turned out that the U.S. special services had created obstacles in the purchase of the drug that Primakov needed and that was available on American territory; as a result, the drug from the USA to Russia was delivered with a delay (Gusev, Khudokormov, 2024). This was announced by the representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, M.V. Zakharova: The medicine for Primakov was seized by the American special services. *Uralinformburo*. January 16, 2017. Available at: <https://www.uralinform.ru/news/politics/266180-lekarstvo-dlyaprimakova-izyali-amerikanskiespecslujby> (accessed: 24.07.2024).

export of the synthetic opiate fentanyl and other illegal drugs, which provoked a new wave of the opioid crisis in the United States. Washington claims that China has become the leading supplier of precursors, the substances necessary for the production of fentanyl; Chinese authorities are supporting their own chemical companies to produce a new opioid and supply it to Mexican drug cartels. Thus, China is stabilizing its revenue base and harming its geopolitical rival, the United States. The damage is very noticeable: due to fentanyl poisoning, which is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine, 200 citizens die in the United States every day, which is equivalent to the daily crash of a passenger Boeing-737; in 2019 deaths from fentanyl overdose in the United States overtook the death rate of road accidents, recently it has become the most common cause of death for Americans aged 18 to 45¹³. We should add that in this case China does not suffer from any ethical dilemma – this is its geopolitical response to the participation of businesspeople from the United States in the Anglo-Saxon campaign to supply opium to China and generate large-scale drug abuse in it, which took place 200 years ago.

8. The use of historical and psychological conditions. The rejection of ethical and legal norms in governance wars allows the leading countries to use historical circumstances against their less fortunate opponents. Let us consider this war factor in more detail using the example of Russia and the United States.

The defeat of the USSR in the Cold War fundamentally weakened Russia, depriving it of many strategic advantages. However, this was not enough for Washington, and it continued to put pressure on Russia in order to further weaken and dismember it. This U.S. policy was based on an important, though not universal, historical pattern, which we will call Rule 1: the country's

desire to try again and win the wars it lost or “did not quite win” leads to a repetition of the original disposition, but in deteriorating geopolitical conditions (Evstafiev, 2024, p. 196). For example, Germany, after losing the First World War, tried to “eventually win” it by starting the Second World War. However, the situation fundamentally worsened – now Germany was actively opposed by the sharply strengthened United States (instead of its sluggish and short participation in the First World War) and the consolidated and industrialized USSR (instead of the agrarian Russian Empire with a deteriorating statehood in the First World War). It is not surprising that this war was fatal for Germany. Roughly the same thing is happening to Russia now – it is forced to defend its political sovereignty after its defeat in the Third World War in radically deteriorated geopolitical conditions – it is deprived of huge resources (compared with the USSR, it has lost 30% of its territory and more than 50% of its population, as well as many knowledge-intensive economic sectors) and it is opposed by a greater number of hostile countries (almost all European States, some of which were under the patronage of the USSR during the Third World War). However, unlike Germany, which aspired to geopolitical hegemony during the Second World War, Russia was forced to join the Fourth World War to preserve its sovereignty. This use of Washington's historical advantage and political situation is one of the modern tools of the global governance war.

Among other things, the logic of geopolitical confrontation has deep evolutionary (biological) foundations. Let us explain them using myrmecology. Fertilized ant queens are at constant risk of being killed by ants from another family, and therefore they form a group of 10–15 individuals for joint protection; when the ants of their offspring mature, they ruthlessly destroy the extra females one by one, stretching them by their legs and stinging them to death until only one, the most fertile, remains (Wilson, 2022, p. 73). This leads

¹³ See: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/17/04/2024/661fc75e9a794736343f365b?ysclid=m6f39e3hdc804562181>

to a biological principle: the maternal structure is destroyed by its own offspring if it is inferior to another more effective structure. This principle can be projected onto the geopolitical system, turning into Rule 2: in dominant countries (Gerschenkron, 2015) that lose global competition to the hegemon State, their own elites and populations often contribute to its collapse in favor of the hegemon State. It was precisely this problem that Russia faced at the start of the special military operation, when a wide stratum of political opposition and the “fifth column” emerged in the country, both among the business elite, politicians, ordinary people, scientific community and cultural workers. By raising the stakes in Ukraine, the United States is using to its advantage the deep biological and psychological patterns of global competition and thereby perpetuating an asymmetry in the behavior of the political classes of the United States and Russia: in the first case, an aggressive, uncompromising and largely irresponsible model of confrontation, in the second – overly cautious, prudent and overly responsible. This fact may not even be realized by the population and decision makers, but it encourages them to adopt a well-defined line of behavior.

Thus, governance warfare relies on the full range of available scientific knowledge, including implicit knowledge from related sciences¹⁴.

Governance wars and governance cycles

The castling of dominant countries and colonies, which periodically occurs in the world economic system, is associated with profound changes in the course of governance wars. It is quite obvious that the colonial cycles would not have taken place if they had not been supported by peculiar governance cycles. In this case, we are talking about the fact that the effectiveness of the governance system of different states is

not a constant, but is subject to extremely strong fluctuations. For example, by the beginning of the First World War, the Russian Empire had come up with an extremely ineffective system of government. In fact, the country’s ruling class had no clear idea what the global war consisted of, what its rules and laws were, what Russia’s essential interests were, and what its strategic goals and objectives should be (Nolde, 2024). However, after the creation of the USSR, the reformatting of the state’s governance system began, and for 50 years of its existence, the country had a governance system no worse, and perhaps even better, than that of the United States. Otherwise, the USSR would not have achieved so much while initially finding itself in a tough situation. Subsequently, the situation changed dramatically again – the USSR’s governance system took the path of increasing bureaucracy and formalism against the background of an overflow of unqualified managers at all levels of the system. As a result, the Cold War was lost.

In addition to the castling in the level of public administration efficiency within the country, similar processes can be observed between different States. So, before our eyes, the formation of another governance cycle is taking place, when the Chinese governance system begins to surpass the American one. Although a simple measurement is impossible here, there are many indirect facts that indicate this. While the number of man-made disasters is increasing in the United States, and train wrecks are becoming almost the norm, China has created a truly unprecedented infrastructure that attracts tourists from all over the world to witness the wonders of modern construction. The fact that the Chinese company *Broad Sustainable Building* is able to build a 30-storey skyscraper withstanding a magnitude nine earthquake¹⁵ in 2 weeks indicates, first of all, the high culture of corporate governance.

¹⁴ A more detailed consideration of the psychological factors of management warfare is not among the objectives of the article, although it is of interest, as well.

¹⁵ See: <https://fishki.net/2821930-beshenaja-strojka-v-kitae-postroili-30-jetazhnyj-otely-za-2-nedeli.html>

We see something similar when, for example, Chinese specialists built a multi-storey hotel, completing it in 2 days¹⁶. Even more impressive is a Chinese project to rebuild and expand the Xi'an Railway Station in Shaanxi Province in northwestern China, which took 9 hours and 1.5 thousand workers; large-scale modernization was carried out in anticipation of the transport boom before, during and after the Spring Festival – Chinese New Year¹⁷. It is quite obvious that such work is due primarily to the careful planning of all the details of the reconstruction, which once again indicates a qualitatively new level of governance in China. There are almost an infinite number of such examples, whereas the United States has not demonstrated such results for a long time.

Governance cycles can include the phenomenon of opium wars mentioned earlier. In the 19th century European colonists, in collaboration with businessmen from the United States, were able to impose mass opiate consumption on China, followed by a century and a half of degradation of the country, while in the 21st century the Celestial Empire returns its debt to America, provoking a fentanyl crisis among the American population. If 200 years ago the Chinese governance system was unable to prevent negative impacts of world trade in some cases, then at present the American governance system finds itself in a similar situation.

There are more obvious macroeconomic examples in relation to the USA/China castling. For example, an exogenous disaster in the form of the coronavirus epidemic of 2020–2021 caused completely different results in the two countries: in the USA in 2020 production fell by 3%, while in China it increased by 2%; in the USA in 2020–2021 life expectancy decreased by 2.8 years and reached 76 years, while in China it increased up to

78 years; mortality in the USA increased by 25% during this period, i.e. by a million deaths relative to the trend, while in China it did not change (Popov, 2025). The efficiency of the PRC's state machine and the maneuverability of its economy have also demonstrated their capabilities: the production of protective masks in the country increased from 15 million per day in early February 2020 to 100 million per day by the end of the same month; 3,000 Chinese enterprises that previously had nothing to do with health products began producing masks, protective suits, sanitizers and other hygiene products (Popov, 2025). All this once again demonstrates that the effectiveness of public administration in China is already much higher than in the United States.

Thus, the field of governance has its own cycles caused by competition between States and uncompromising governance wars.

Methodological conclusions: five levels of social phenomena

The presence of castling of dominant States and governance wars testifies, first of all, to the impossibility of the eternal hegemony of any empire. The rotation of leaders and outsiders occurs despite all actions aimed at hindering this process. It is not surprising that in the course of such permutations, civilizational risks and military clashes arise. However, history shows that this does not frighten anyone. As Michel Houellebecq rightly wrote, “we risk losing only those economic wars that we lack the courage to enter” (Houellebecq, 2023, p. 521). Apparently, Russia, Iran, China, India, and North Korea have the guts to claim something more than what the current hegemon, the United States of America, has measured out to them.

Another important consequence of the governance wars under consideration is a new understanding of the hierarchy of both the social processes themselves and the social concepts describing them.

¹⁶ See: <https://yandex.ru/video/preview/16236185488196857702>

¹⁷ See: <https://gudok.ru/news/?ID=1450028>

Based on planetary logic, it is advisable to consider five social levels. The first one, *meta level*, covers global planetary processes, regardless of state borders. These can be climatic issues, mass population migrations, major natural and man-made disasters, etc. The second, *mega level*, considers the geopolitical space with all States in complex interactions. These are technological, patent, trade, currency, military and other wars and alliances. The third, *macro level*, covers national economy and issues related to regulating its activity and balance. These are traditional monetary, fiscal, and currency policies, etc. The focus of the fourth, *meso level*, is on large sectoral and regional subsystems of the national economy. This is the prerogative of regional policy, intergovernmental fiscal relations, free economic zones, technological and social priorities. The fifth, *micro level*, includes business entities from individuals and households to large corporations. At this level, family and corporate policies are developed, taking into account competition and cooperation with other market participants.

The levels described above are nothing new; however, in our opinion, a new way of looking at them is in the nature of their hierarchy. For example, back in the 1940s the British historian Arnold Toynbee wrote: “One of my own cardinal points was that the smallest intelligible fields of historical study were whole societies and not arbitrarily insulated fragments of them like the nation-states...” (Toynbee, 2011, p. 17). In other words, it is impossible to adequately understand the history of one country or people without understanding the entire world history, in the context of which the respective countries and peoples fit. This provision was shifted from studying historical *retrospect* to forecasting future *prospects*, which gives the following formula: a qualitative forecast of the development of an individual country cannot be made without having an idea of the future development of the whole world (Balatsky, Ekimova,

2021). However, macroeconomics has turned this situation around: according to traditional economic theory, all systemic movements begin from below – at the micro level, spreading further and refracting into larger-scale events at higher social levels. For example, back in the 1980s, the following research paradigm was in effect: “The research methodology consists in evaluating the main indicators of aggregate demand based on the principles of combining micro and macro approaches”; “any macroeconomic construction can be erroneous if it is not supported by a model of a firm operating in conditions of imperfect competition” (Weitzman, 1989, p. 1044). Consequently, other levels grow, up to a powerful state, from the micro level and from the activity and capacity of economic agents. The States themselves compete with each other with the help of more or less effective macroeconomic policies, which allows some to get ahead, while others lag behind.

However, in the 21st century, the macro-economic view of the world turns out to be hopelessly outdated. The hierarchy of links between the levels becomes the exact opposite. Thus, global planetary phenomena, i.e. phenomena of the meta level, generate the very process of the emergence of ancient States, empires and civilizations in a well-defined geographical area – in the “happy latitudes” (Sachs, 2022); thus, the behavioral basis for the next social level is formed. Geopolitical confrontations of States, i.e. mega-level processes lead to the emergence of dominant countries and colonies when the development of the latter is artificially restrained. The subordinate (neocolonial) position of the country leads to the forced adherence of its macro policy to those recommendations that benefit the hegemon State and are often detrimental to the local economy. And finally, inefficient and even inadequate macro policies do not allow national firms and companies, their own innovation markets and entrepreneurial traditions to appear and develop.

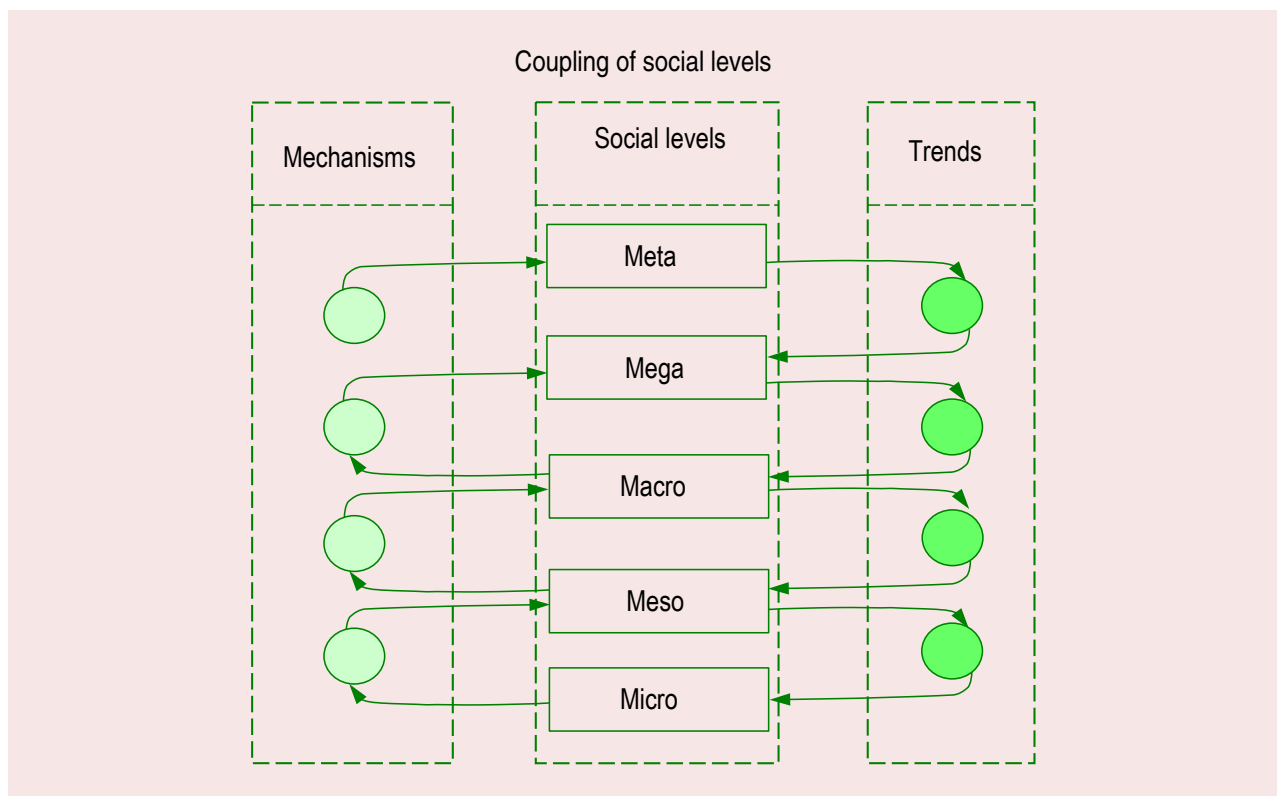
Thus, in the global world, the hierarchical rule is formulated as follows: *the higher levels determine the vector of development of the lower ones*. From a philosophical and theoretical point of view, this principle is a projection of the law of synarchy (Shmakov, 2016). In this context, it becomes obvious that the attempts of a dependent State under neocolonial pressure with a controlled governance system to find the right macroeconomic policy to ensure its dynamic development are groundless. It is this circumstance that generates the parade of sovereignty that we have observed in recent years, when an increasing number of countries are trying to get out from under the direct and indirect control of the dominant center – the United States.

Of course, the new view does not negate the old hierarchy, but rather complements it as shown in the *Figure*. As it should be in any cybernetic system, there is a direct and inverse relationship between the social levels. However, the new understanding focuses on the direct link between a higher level and a lower one, which sets the *trends* for the

development of the lower level, driven by the needs of the upper level. At the same time, the feedback between a lower level and a higher one creates *mechanisms* for the formation of a higher link, a specific social mechanism for combining active elements into a more global system. These mechanisms themselves turn out to be predetermined by the needs of the highest level.

The hierarchy shown in the Figure corresponds to modern interdisciplinary concepts. Suffice it to recall Edward Wilson's ideas about the relationship between discipline and "anti-discipline": for a certain discipline (science), there is a discipline with a more general object and principles of research, which acts as an anti-discipline. Thus, physics serves as an anti-discipline for chemistry, chemistry for biology, and biology for the social sciences (Wilson, 2015, p. 37).

Indeed, at first an individual should be able to live on Earth at all, after solving this problem there is a need to divide the geopolitical space into separate countries, and when a nation-state



is isolated, it becomes necessary to establish interaction between its regions, and for this it is necessary to provide some organizational models of households and companies. In turn, the specific models of functioning of households and companies determine the degree of success of mastering the fragments of the State, their interaction, etc., right up to the formation of a certain model of the survival of all humankind.

Although this may seem extremely simple and trite, economics is still dominated by the idea that all creative impulses are generated at the individual level, and then they simply aggregate at higher levels. Such ideas produce fruitless arguments about the priority of the individual and the collective. The diagram in the figure removes this confrontation and puts everything in its place.

The misconception that the lower levels predestine the upper ones creates a distorted picture of the economic development of States. For example, the successes and failures of different countries are explained by purely cultural or institutional differences. South Korea and North Korea are typical examples. However, the divergence of these countries' paths is primarily based on their entry into different geopolitical alliances. Currently, there is every reason to get rid of such cognitive distortions.

Conclusion

Thus, the crystallization such a phenomenon as governance wars in the modern world makes it possible not only to introduce this concept, but also to look at many issues in a new way.

The essence of the doctrine of governance wars is to maximize the strengthening of one's own governance system and to critically weaken the

enemy's public administration system when all the links of the state body cease to work effectively and cope with their tasks. The specificity of governance wars lies in their unprecedented totality, duration and uncompromising nature. These properties allowed the United States to crush its geopolitical rival, the USSR, without a direct military clash. The immediate result of the defeat in the Cold (governance) War was Russia losing all the strategic advantages characteristic of the USSR.

The core of the doctrine of governance wars is the structural model of global dominance, in which governing depends on hard, soft and smart power. The set of tools and algorithms for modern governance wars is quite diverse: promoting one's own ideology; working with local elites; masks syndrome and conspiracy in political elites; control over the information space; color revolutions; proxy wars; destruction of medical sovereignty. Proper manipulation of these tools allows the United States to maintain global dominance. At the same time, the existence of governance cycles, which are understood as fluctuations in the level of effectiveness of the public administration system, brings new countries, in particular China, to the forefront of world politics.

The presence of five levels of social phenomena – meta, mega, macro, meso and micro levels – presupposes their two-way hierarchy, since higher-level processes determine the vector of development of lower-level processes; lower-level processes form the mechanisms for the implementation of higher-level processes. In modern conditions, this paradigm is becoming particularly important, preventing the formation of distorted cognitive patterns in relation to the driving forces of development of countries.

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