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## INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS OF SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

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# The “Five-Year Plan” of Spatial Development and Regional Policy of Russia: Running in Place or Readiness for a Sprint?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**—This article considers trends in the field of spatial development and regional policy of the Russian Federation in the last five years against the backdrop of global trends, external challenges, and threats. The features of the so-called “eastern vector” of the spatial development of Russia as a new element of the country’s spatial policy and as an important direction of its cross-border interactions have been revealed. It has been shown that, so far, its implementation is dominated by state support for Far Eastern investment projects and priority development areas, while Siberia and its regions are practically excluded from this strategic initiative. Trends in the field of national, interregional, and regional strategizing have been analyzed (based on the example of the Strategy for the Spatial Development of the Russian Federation, the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of the Angara-Yenisey Macroregion, strategies and models of development and management implemented in the Novosibirsk and Kemerovo oblasts). Based on the analysis of the statements of the highest officials of the state, a synopsis of the latest strategic initiatives in the field of state management of spatial development processes has been formulated. The conclusion has been substantiated that even in the extremely difficult conditions of Russia’s development observed in the last five years, new strategic initiatives gradually began to appear, and new trends were formed. On the one hand, they provided grounds for cautious optimism regarding the modernization of regional policy and the spatial development of the country. On the other hand, under geopolitical and economic conditions that have taken shape since the spring of 2022, these trends should be reassessed in the light of new realities.

**Keywords:** spatial development, regional policy, regional strategy, Siberia, eastern vector of Russia’s development, digital economy, Angara-Yenisey macroregion

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## INTRODUCTION

The famous five-year plans were a symbol of the Soviet era. For these specific periods, state plans for the socioeconomic development of the country were drawn up, and the results of their implementation were discussed at the next congresses of the CPSU, which, as a rule, also took place every five years. The historiography of the USSR was also established in accordance with five-year cycles, and certain achievements of the Soviet state were tied to specific five-year plans.

It is possible that future historiographers of post-Soviet Russia will also use five-year plans to designate significant periods in the development of the new Russian state. A ten-year time frame is too long, and within it there are strong shifts in trends and significant changes in the driving forces of the country’s development.

From these positions, we will consider some trends in the spatial development of the Russian Federation,

as well as the formation and implementation of its regional policy over the past five years. Previously, the author published articles on trends, efficiency, results and problems of the development of federalism, regional policy, state regulation of the spatial development of the country, and they were also tied to certain temporal stages of Russia’s development (see (Seliverstov, 2008, 2013, 2016)). These articles had a fairly strong critical focus, but the author also tried to identify positive trends and results, the best practices of regional development and regional strategizing, new points of growth on the map of Russia. We will continue this practice in this publication.

This article supplements and expands the synopsis of the processes of spatial development of the Russian Federation in the context of global challenges and threats of the 21st century, which is contained in the works of colleagues in recent years. Kryukov (2019) analyzed the problems of the socioeconomic development of Siberia, the Arctic, and the implementation of a new policy for the development of natural resource potential as a necessary condition for harmonizing

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relations between the federal center and the regions. Minakir (2016) considered the “Far eastern vector” of the spatial economy. Kuleshov considered the new positioning of Siberia in the Russian space (Kuleshov and Seliverstov, 2018). Suslov (2017) discussed modeling the spatial development of Russia with an emphasis on the role of the Siberian regions in it. Leksin and Porfiriev (2019) studied the Russian features of the “megalopolis” and the development problems of the Russian Arctic. Papers by Zubarevich (2016 and others) were devoted to the social development of Russian regions, while Kuznetsova (2019) considered the priorities of Russia’s spatial development in the context of international experience, and Shvetsov (2020) discussed regional aspects of the formation of the information society in Russia. Kolomak (2020) examined the spatial development of post-Soviet Russia and the role of large cities and urban agglomerations in the country’s urban system. There are many other interesting publications that depict Russian regional science not standing aside from the urgent problems of the spatial arrangement of our country, offering ways to solve them and mechanisms for implementing a new regional policy.

The main objective of this article was to consider how the spatial development of the Russian Federation and its regional policy fit into modern world trends, what new threats arise here, and how the government reacts to these problems.

#### THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA AND ITS REGIONAL POLICY ON THE BACKGROUND OF GLOBAL TRENDS AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES AND THREATS

The most important feature of Russia is the exceptional importance of the spatial factors of its development. The largest country in the world in terms of territory with a strong heterogeneity of the conditions for the functioning of its regions (in terms of natural-climatic, resource, socioeconomic, infrastructural, and ethno-national specifics) still cannot find and implement an effective model of its spatial organization. The vast territories of Russia, according to foreign scientists and experts, are becoming not its most important strategic advantage, but a burden, and resource wealth is becoming a “resource curse” (Hill and Gaddy, 2003). Such conclusions are especially persistent in regard to Asian Russia, that is, Siberia and the Far East. Our position is that the “Siberian curse” and “raw material backwardness” of the country and Siberia has never existed and do not exist. There is an “institutional curse” in Russia and Siberia associated with the inability of the state to rationally use the space and resources of the country and its macroregions and with the unwillingness of business to implement projects for the deep processing of extracted raw materials

and fuel in the territory where these resources are concentrated (or in nearby areas).

The past five years have not yet given positive signals about the transition to a new effective model of the spatial organization of the Russian economy and society. Despite some positive changes in the regional policy of the state (which will be discussed below), this policy remains archaic and unproductive, and spatial aspects are poorly taken into account in other state policies of the country: social, investment, scientific, and technical. Russian business, coming to new regions, pursues mainly its own corporate interests, but not the interests of their population and the environment.

The main characteristic of the considered five-year development cycle of the Russian Federation is that the combination of internal conditions for the functioning of its economy, external influences and shocks, as well as the new global threat of a pandemic, gives reason to speak of this period as *the most critical and difficult time* for the country in the new millennium. Under the conditions of the economic crisis and the strongest external challenges and threats, any significant positive results are unlikely in just one area of state building. This is especially true for the processes of modernization of the spatial development of Russia, which requires enormous resources for infrastructure and innovation projects, as well as the consolidation of government and society, the federal center and regions, business, government, and the population.

Nevertheless, during this period, not only did the Russian socioeconomic space not undergo catastrophic changes, but weak positive trends arose in it: a readiness to respond to new technological challenges, trends, and changes in the global conditions for the functioning of the world economy. Let us dwell briefly on such an “external background” of Russia’s spatial development in the last five years.

(1) *The crisis state of the economy of the Russian Federation.* This period was characterized by steady stagnation that began in 2013. During the pandemic, it had already developed into a real crisis. According to academician A.G. Aganbegyan (2021), over the seven years of stagnation (from 2013 to 2019), GDP per capita increased by only 3%. There was a 5.5% decrease in gross fixed capital formation; spending on R&D, education, and healthcare fell by 6%; exports and imports by 20–25%; real incomes of the population by 10.4%; household final consumption expenditures by 1.5%. In 2020 alone, the number of poor people with incomes below the subsistence level increased by 1.3 million people (and for seven years of stagnation, by 4 million people). Statistically confirmed outflow of capital from the country for the period of 2016–2020 amounted to almost USD 200 bln. Drivers of socioeconomic growth were also significantly weakened: the accumulation of fixed capital was declining,

the share of the knowledge economy in GDP decreased in 2020 to 14%. 2021 was characterized by a slight recovery growth; however, expert estimates show that after the end of the coronavirus pandemic, Russia will again slide into a rut of stagnation with minimal annual economic growth.

The most important negative result of the past years is the growing dynamics of depopulation in Russia: it has catastrophically increased from 2000 people in 2016 to 702000 people in 2020 and up to 422000 people only in the first half of 2021.

Obviously, in such conditions, which were also characterized by a significant increase in spending on defense and law enforcement agencies, one could not count on support for projects and programs for modernizing the economic space of the Russian Federation and its regions. At the same time, in addition to the state budget, the country had other strong sources for the implementation of strategic directions of the state regional policy: it had the lowest public debt among developed countries, amounting to only 19% of GDP; it had the largest gold and foreign exchange reserves (more than USD 600 bln in 2020) and colossal assets of the banking system, which exceeded the volume of the gross domestic product of the Russian Federation.

(2) *Sanctions and restrictions of Western countries in relation to Russia.* These were introduced in 2014 after Crimea became part of the Russian Federation and only intensified in subsequent years. The sanctions were aimed at curtailing contacts and cooperation with Russia in various areas, applied both to specific individuals and to a number of Russian companies. The curtailment of international relations was especially significant in high-tech industries, and this affected the development of territories of their concentration.

(3) *Oil shocks of 2019–2020.* During this period, there was more than a two-fold reduction in oil prices. According to RBK, 2019 oil and gas revenues in the broadest sense accounted for more than one-third of all revenues of the Russian budget system (federal budget, regional budgets, and social funds). Undoubtedly, the catastrophic decline in oil prices had a significant impact on Russia's budget in 2000 and made it difficult to carry out antivirus measures in its regions. In 2021, oil prices rose markedly, and this gave greater stability to oil and gas producing territories.

(4) *The coronavirus pandemic.* Being a national tragedy for most countries of the world, the pandemic had a specific distribution in Russia. While the country passed the first wave of COVID-19 relatively successfully (especially given the crisis state of its economy, sanctions restrictions, and oil shocks), the second and third waves showed that Russia is no better than other countries in coping with this global threat. The catastrophic increase in mortality from the fall of 2020 was associated with the lag in the mass produc-

tion of domestic vaccines, population's low vaccination rates and “irresponsibility” (as per the authorities). With the greater pathogenicity and danger of new strains of coronavirus, its spread and deadly consequences are already running up against the limits of the development of healthcare systems in the Russian regions. In (Seliverstov et al., 2021), Russian features of the fight against the coronavirus pandemic were considered in detail and both barriers and opportunities for interaction between federal and regional authorities, practical medicine, science, and high-tech business, as well as the population and civil society in this direction were identified. In particular, the importance of the quality of regional governance in the face of global threats was shown.

Academician Aganbegyan gives the following expert assessment of the impact of the main components of the Russian crisis of 2020–2021: 50–60% is due to the coronavirus pandemic, 20–25% is due to oil and gas shocks, reduced demand for these resources and sanctions restrictions, and the rest is due to continuation of recent stagnation trends.

(5) *New technological and natural and climatic trends.* These include the development of a digital and green economy, as well as a sharp increase in the importance of protecting the natural environment and counteracting the negative effects of climate change and, in this regard, the development of hydrogen and low-carbon energy, decarbonization and conservation of the ozone layer.

Despite the stagnation and crisis state of the Russian economy, the digital economy in Russia has developed quite rapidly over the past five years. This was manifested in the development of new platforms and business ecosystems, in a sharp increase in the largest domestic online trading platforms and marketplaces (Wildberries, Ozon, Sbermegamarket, Yandex.Market, etc.), retail, network communication platforms, and artificial intelligence. The coronavirus pandemic was a kind of trigger for these processes, which also had their own regional characteristics. A number of federal subjects and cities with a favorable economic and geographical position plus a developed transport and logistics system have grown into large interregional e-commerce hubs (Novosibirsk is a striking example). In the economy of regions and cities, the role of high-tech services related to the digital economy and e-commerce has increased, domestic leaders and outsiders have emerged there.

A new trend in the field of the digital economy in the years under review was the implementation in Russia of the concepts and models of “smart region” and “smart city.” Electronic services for citizens, intelligent systems in housing and communal services, in transport management and public safety have become a reality of the leading federal subjects and cities. Some can even compete with other countries at how well such systems are implemented. With the help of

digital technologies, the connection between citizens and authorities in terms of the provision of services based on modern multifunctional centers is fundamentally changing. A special role here is played by the management policies of local administrations in the field of information technology and the establishment of their close cooperation with leading IT companies. This manifested itself, among other things, in the course of anti-pandemic measures in regions and cities, accompanied by the introduction of intelligent systems for monitoring the spread of coronavirus.

Modern telecommunication systems, which are being developed, including in the format of the digital economy, correct interactions along the center-periphery line and their development brings regions and their inhabitants closer together (albeit in the virtual space). This is especially important for the remote territories of Siberia and the Far East. At the same time, despite the increasing coverage of the country's territory with modern telecommunications technologies, communication networks, and high-speed Internet, a new type of Russian inter-regional inequality is emerging before our eyes, that is, the digital divide. As an example, telemedicine and online education, in principle, do not have spatial boundaries, but the places of their organization, concentration, and telecommunication online hubs of interactions can be formed only in the most advanced regional scientific and innovative systems. At the same time, regions and cities quite far from the capital often become the leaders of digitalization, and the regions of Central Russia become outsiders.

While in the field of the digital economy over the past five years, serious positive changes have indeed taken place in Russian regions and cities, Russia has only just begun to embark on a green economy. The "garbage reform" is stalling, its inefficient implementation and the accompanying corruption cause protests by the population. The National Ecology Project provides for a two-fold reduction in emissions of hazardous pollutants into the atmospheric air that cause the greatest harm to the environment and human health only by 2030. In the regions, the elimination of especially dangerous facilities will be required, for which, according to the profile vice-premier for this issue V.V. Abramchenko, it will take approximately 4–5 years. Another direction is connected with the preservation of the unique natural objects that Russia is rich in, and here special attention is again paid to Baikal. The green economy also aims at a massive transformation of agriculture and the production of organic food. This can serve as a new driver of development for several eastern regions of the country that are included in the category of depressed regions.

Another new trend in world development, which has significantly increased over the past five years, is international control over climate change, which in recent years has become threatening. The control of

climate change and the decarbonization of the economy can lead to serious changes in the development of specific regions of Russia. A few (for example, Kuzbass) must seriously adjust their long-term plans and forecasts for their development and prepare for large-scale maneuvers to restructure the regional economy.

Whereas the noted Russian trends and world trends of the last five years certainly influenced the processes of spatial development of the Russian Federation, this influence was not always negative. Some regions have even strengthened their positions in the economic and technological space of the country. However, in general, during the period under review, there were no serious changes in the spatial structure of the country, and it remained rather conservative. There were no positive changes in the development of Asian Russia: the share of Siberia and the Far East in Russia's GDP did not increase, and the trend of outflow of their population persisted (Kryukov et al., 2020). The outflow of the population was the result of both the continuing lagging behind of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions in terms of quality and standard of living compared to the European regions of the country, and a decrease in their demand for labor. As an example, the share of the population living on the territory of the Siberian Federal District within its current borders in the country's population decreased from 12.6% in 1995 to 11.8% in 2020, with the continuing trend of a positive balance of international migration of the population to the territory of the district.

The only "conditionally positive" result in the spatial development of Russia in the analyzed period was the relative reduction in interregional differences, for example, in per capita GRP in the federal subjects. However, this is hardly worth evaluating as the effectiveness of the state regional policy. The reduction of interregional differences is typical for periods of crisis and stagnation in the country's economy when the opportunities for economic growth in the advanced regions are, first and foremost, reduced.

Of course, positive changes were observed in specific regions, related, for example, to the implementation of the Safe and High-Quality Motorways national project. However, "shock resistance" to the above-mentioned Russian features of stagnation and crisis, to "oil shocks," to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, etc., of regions of the Russian Federation varied significantly. Thus, O.V. Kuznetsova (2020) showed that the degree of diversification of their economies and their innovative potential were of key importance for Russian regions in their counteraction to external shocks of the last five years. The largest cities were in a relatively favorable position, where restrictions in certain types of activities were offset by the growth in demand for high-tech services, the accelerated introduction of online formats of activity and remote employment. The specialization of the regional economy also mattered: the maximum,

which is typical for crises, was the decline in the automotive industry; the general recession of the world economy hit the regions with large-scale extraction of fuel and energy resources hard. Certainly, one traditional factor of regional development became significant in 2020–2021, that is, the capacity of sales markets, which contributed to the growth of production in the largest cities and industrial centers.

### THE EASTERN VECTOR OF RUSSIA'S DEVELOPMENT

The most important and long-awaited element of Russia's new regional policy over the past five years has been the “pivot to the East” and the beginning of the implementation of the eastern vector of the country's spatial development. The concept of an “eastern vector of Russia's development” has been intensively used since 2014–2015, after the start of anti-Russian actions of Western countries, due to Crimea becoming part of the Russian Federation. The introduction of sanction restrictions, a sharp drop in trade with European countries, the United States, Canada, etc., the curtailment of contacts with Russia by the West in many areas had the natural consequence of the reorientation of the Russian Federation in its international interactions towards the countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia, and primarily to China.

Another trigger of the eastern vector was the long-awaited pivot to the East in the spatial policy of post-Soviet Russia, which was first outlined by the President of the Russian Federation in the Address to the Federal Assembly in December 2013. Tax incentives were introduced, which should be extended to the regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia and provided creation of priority economic development territories there with special preferential conditions.

The eastern vector should be considered in two aspects: as an element of the spatial policy of the Russian Federation (in the Soviet period, the term “pivot to the East” was used for this) and as the most important direction of Russia's cross-border interactions amid the current global instability and turbulence (Parmon et al., 2020).

Let us briefly dwell on the internal problems of the implementation of the eastern vector. For its state-institutional support, the Ministry of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic and the Corporation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic were created. In 2020, the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation On measures for the socioeconomic development of the Far East was adopted. In total, in recent years, more than 40 federal laws and 191 resolutions have been adopted to develop the economy and social sphere in the Far East. An important strategic initiative in recent years has been the implementation of the comprehensive investment project (CIP) Yenisey Siberia, aimed

at the development of three regions: Krasnoyarsk krai, the Republic of Khakassia, and the Tyva Republic. This CIP includes 32 investment projects with a total declared investment value of over RUB 1.9 tln (until 2027). The CIP participants include more than 60 companies, including those that are leaders in the world markets for industrial products.

In general, the scale of domestic and foreign investments in the development of the Far East carried out over the past five years is impressive, but the return on them is not very significant so far, serious results have not been achieved from the functioning of the Far Eastern priority development territories, although a number of them have very strong prospects. The government plans to develop nonprimary industries on the eastern borders of the country, which corresponds to the course towards the modernization of the Russian economy and reducing its dependence on a raw material orientation. However, one has to be realistic here. A serious barrier on this path is the shortage of qualified personnel in the Far Eastern regions, whose elimination requires extraordinary measures of state support. The implementation of the Far Eastern Hectare program in order to attract the population to the Far East did not produce significant results.

As for the position of Siberia in the spatial policy of the Russian Federation in terms of the implementation of its eastern vector, here, unfortunately, the reality turned out to be very far from optimistic expectations. Although Siberia significantly surpasses the Far East in terms of its resource, economic, scientific and technological potential, it actually turned out to be outside the eastern vector. State support only for Far Eastern projects and strategic initiatives began to prevail in it. All the promised preferential regimes for economic activity were distributed mainly to the Far Eastern territories of priority development, in which a special legal regime for the implementation of entrepreneurial activity was established. In total, 23 such zones were created in the east of Russia, with 19 of them in the Far East and 4 in Eastern Siberia.

Thus, in fact, Siberia and the Far East were artificially divided in the system of state priorities, although the author believes that a single state policy should be applied to these macroregions. This is determined both by the similarity of the conditions for their development (remoteness from the economic and cultural centers of the most developed European part of the country, the presence of unique mineral deposits of world significance, and the harsh natural and climatic conditions) and by the fact that depopulation of the colossal spaces of Asian Russia, which are the country's strategic spatial resource, cannot be allowed.

If we consider the eastern vector as the most important direction of Russia's cross-border interactions, then we have to admit that there is still a lack of state policy in the field of systemic economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian interaction with the

countries of Northeast Asia, based on a scientifically based strategy. The eastern vector, as a priority area for spatial development and intercountry interactions in Russia, does not yet have serious scientific support and the main activities and projects are carried out as an initiative of state corporations and vertically integrated companies (Parmon et al., 2020). This is especially noticeable against the background of China's large-scale actions to implement the Belt and Road Initiative, accompanied by huge investments in the formation of new Eurasian transport corridors. It is expected that Chinese companies will form 46 cooperation zones in the area covered by this initiative (Li, 2021).

We believe that it is unrealistic to count on the success of integrating Siberia and the Far East into cross-border interactions within the framework of the eastern vector until effective internal Russian integration relationships are established. Therefore, the idea that the growth of the economy of the Far East will provide a one-sided orientation towards integration with the countries of the Asia-Pacific Region (on which the main stake is now being placed) is illusory. It is just as pointless to hope for an influx of foreign investors into Russia until normal investment conditions are created for Russian companies.

#### TRENDS IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGY

Using specific examples, we will give our assessment of the changes that have taken place over the past five years in the development and use of strategies and programs at the national (in terms of spatial development), interregional and regional levels.

**National level.** The most significant event, to which the attention of both the scientific community and regional authorities was riveted, was the development of the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025 (hereinafter referred to as SDS). It was expected that it would document the most important strategic priorities in the arrangement of the Russian economic space, the most significant interregional projects that contribute to strengthening the integration ties of the regions and the coherence of the country's space, measures to reduce excessive differentiation in the levels of socioeconomic development of regions and cities of Russia, specific measures to improvement of the state regional policy, institutional conditions and mechanisms for the implementation of the set strategic goals and objectives, etc.

However, it is rare that a document coming out of the depths of the Government of the Russian Federation and its ministries (perhaps, with the exception of the draft pension reform) was met with such a negative reaction in Russian society and in the professional environment. Our earlier work (Seliverstov et al.,

2019) considers the shortcomings of this document in detail. Thus, it was shown that this strategy was doomed to failure, since it was based on a shaky ideological and methodological foundation, and it diligently bypassed the acute problems of the modern spatial structure of Russia. As a result, the approved SDS has no supporters either in the business environment, or in the regional elites, and even more so in the expert community. Worst of all, this discredits the very idea of developing and implementing a strategy for the long-term development of its space that is really necessary for our country.

**Interregional level.** Over the past five years, none of the federal districts has developed a new strategy for its socioeconomic development. However, in 2019, the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation initiated the development of the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of the Angara-Yenisey Macroregion (hereinafter referred to as the AYM Strategy) and the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of the South Siberian Macroregion. Taken together, these strategies were supposed to update the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of Siberia for the Period up to 2020, which was approved in 2010.

The AYM Strategy for the period up to 2035 causes an ambivalent assessment. Its development was supposed to be an important step in the formation and implementation of the main program documents for the socioeconomic development of the eastern regions of Russia. However, the Strategy is built on the standard patterns of regional strategies and has a number of serious shortcomings. Let us note the most significant of them.

(1) The Angara-Yenisey macroregion is actually a closed territorial production system, neither integration interactions with adjacent macroregions (primarily with the South Siberian macroregion and the Far Eastern Federal District), nor the interaction of the territories of the AYM itself are considered.

(2) It is indicated that promising clusters will attract 400 000 people to the macroregion. The question arises of where are these people expected to arrive from? Will they be migrants from other Russian regions, if so, then one needs to justify why they will move to the AYM if they have not done so before, or will they be labor migrants? Most importantly, it is not clear how in the future it will be possible to reverse the negative trend of the AYM population loss, which has been steadily holding for a long time (for example, from 1990 to 2020, this macroregion lost more than 300 000 people).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Mainly at the expense of Krasnoyarsk krai and the Republic of Khakassia. The population of the Tyva Republic during this period increased by 23 000 people due to one of the highest birth rates in the country among the titular population. At the same time, there was a large outflow of Russians and representatives of other nationalities from Tyva.

(3) The positioning of the AYM in the global economic, scientific, technological, and cultural spaces is practically not considered.

(4) Modern global opportunities, challenges, and threats faced by the entire world, including the Russian Federation and its regions (development of the digital and green economy, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, decarbonization of the economy, etc.) are not adequately reflected. This strategy in its current form could have appeared 10, 20, or 30 years ago, and no one would have paid attention to the time of its development and would not have seen the attachment to existing global problems.

(5) The problems of the AYM noted in the first sections of the Strategy are not further reflected in the proposed measures, projects, strategic initiatives. As an example, the catastrophic lag of the Tyva Republic in terms of the level of socioeconomic development has long been known and it is obvious that the chronic and growing depression of this region cannot be overcome by the existing practice of federal replenishment of the republican budget. The region remains a peripheral territory and until there is a normal connection with the rest of the country its depression will not be overcome. Meanwhile, the Kyzyl–Kuragino railway was not even mentioned in the draft AYM Strategy. This railway was talked about for many decades, it was even started in 2011, but the construction was then frozen. There are opportunities to continue this road to Mongolia and the PRC, which may allow Tyva to activate new points of growth on its territory. However, in the approved Strategy, in response to the comments of experts, this railway line was included in the list of priority investment projects.

Another example is related to the most difficult environmental situation in several territories of the Angara-Yenisey macroregion. Some of them, for example, Usolye–Sibirskoye, are in a state of national-level ecological catastrophe. This problem is only briefly mentioned, but in the projects or programs of the AYM Strategy, and especially in the system of its activities, it is not further developed or detailed.

(6) Despite the fact that the goal of the AYM development in the draft of its Strategy was “alignment with the territories of the European part of the Russian Federation of socioeconomic development and conditions for the realization of citizens’ rights,” the social orientation of the strategy is not further manifested. Everything again came down to projects for the development of resources, the development of clusters, and so on. The measures noted in it in no way solve the problem of eliminating the gap in the level and quality of life of Siberians in comparison with the population of the regions of the European part of the country. The strategy completely lacks the issue of indigenous peoples living on the territory of the AYM, their state support, and integration into modern economic structures.

The SDS and the AYM Strategy have one common and very indicative feature. The initial versions of these strategies in the form of their concepts were prepared at a very decent level (the SDS Concept by a group of qualified experts and regional scientists, and the AYM Development Concept by the Center for Strategic Research Foundation together with the Boston Consulting Group). However, further processing and adjustment in the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation of these strategies by “squeezing” them into routine and outdated formats of approved government documents, interdepartmental coordination, removal of acute problems and ways to solve them led to the appearance of faceless and useless documents. The Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of Siberia for the Period up to 2020 went exactly the same way in its time, in which, as a result of the censorship efforts of the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, nothing remained of the original version prepared by the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

**Regional and municipal level.** At this level of strategizing, the situation in this period was not as depressing as at the national and interregional levels. In the regions and cities of Russia, new qualified research and consulting teams have appeared that are successfully working in the field of creating policy documents for regional and municipal development. In the federal subjects and municipalities, a modern system of strategic management is gradually beginning to take shape, whose basis are strategies and programs for socioeconomic development.

A rather ambiguous, in our opinion, influence on regional and municipal strategizing in the past five years has been the effect of Federal Law No. 172 On Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation adopted in 2014. On the one hand, this law contains a classification of the main program documents at the level of the country, macroregions, subjects of the Federation and cities and streamlines the process of their development. On the other hand, streamlining and regulation turned out to be unnecessarily rigid, especially for the subjects of the Federation. They are forced to strictly follow the requirements of the standard methodology of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation with the allocation of goals and main tasks, which, as a rule, are the same for the regions (improving the level and quality of life of the population, increasing the efficiency of the regional economy, etc.). As a result, many regional strategies developed according to this template are almost indistinguishable. They do not show the characteristics of a particular region and its special problems or competitive advantages. Blindly following the requirements of Federal Law No. 172 and the standard methods of the Ministry of Economic Development washes away creativity from regional strategizing and deprives regional

strategies of the opportunity to use new original approaches in their development.

Similar requirements are less rigid for regional and municipal programs, and innovations have appeared here in the past period. As an example, problem-oriented regional development programs began to be developed, which was successfully implemented in Novosibirsk oblast in the process of developing a program for the reindustrialization of its economy (Seliverstov, 2017).

The issue related to the quality of national and regional strategizing is far from being idle. After all, the dynamics and effectiveness of the development of Russian regions are determined by a combination of both their resource capabilities and available production potential, as well as management decisions made at the federal, regional, and corporate levels. The consequence of these decisions is the implementation of specific areas of investment, industrial, social, and other policies in this federal subject. It is obvious that the starting conditions and development opportunities for the regions are different, as well as their positioning in the economic space of Russia, which objectively determines the potential for their growth. However, a huge role is also played by subjective factors associated with the choice of some model of socioeconomic development of a particular federal subject and the management systems implemented on its basis. Let us show this by comparing the Novosibirsk and Kemerovo oblasts in the context of the development of regional strategies and programs over the past five years.

#### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: A CASE STUDY OF THE NOVOSIBIRSK AND KEMEROVO OBLASTS

The choice of these two regions for comparison is not accidental. The dominant development of Kemerovo oblast is the exploitation of its unique natural resources, and Novosibirsk oblast, due to the lack of such resources, is forced to use other sources of growth.

*Novosibirsk oblast as a model example of the development of Siberian regions along a nonresource path.* This region can be considered as an exemplary federal subject, which has implemented its own model of economic development based on the realization of its main competitive advantages and effective management decisions.

Over the past half century, Novosibirsk oblast has changed its image, role, and significance in the country's economic system three times. In the 1960s–1980s, it was one of the most developed regions of the RSFSR, specializing in mechanical engineering; from the late 1980s to the end of the 1990s, it was a “new depressed region.” Finally, starting from the first

decade of the new century, it entered the group of the most dynamically developing federal subjects with a diversified economic structure and an orientation towards an innovative development path.

Both the spontaneous processes of the 1990s and the socioeconomic trends in the last 2 decades were based on three main competitive advantages of the region: an advantageous economic and geographical position, strong human potential, and a unique scientific and educational complex.<sup>3</sup>

During the period of market reforms in the 1990s, when the basic engineering industries for Novosibirsk oblast, which were largely oriented towards the military-industrial complex, were particularly affected, economic activities were almost spontaneously transferred to the areas of trade, transport and logistics, financial and high-tech services. The orientation towards the development of services made it possible to mitigate the negative social consequences of the economic and political reforms of the 1990s, to avoid a social explosion, and to create new jobs for those residents of the region who were thrown out of the real sector of the economy. All this made it possible to create the necessary financial and budgetary springboard for a new economic maneuver, that is, reindustrialization (more precisely, a maneuver for the formation of a new economy in the region), which began in the second decade of the 21st century. Having built up economic and budgetary opportunities on the basis of supporting the service sector, the authorities and business of the region were ready for the revival of industry and the formation of other high-tech segments of the economy on a new basis (including in the field of high-tech services). Novosibirsk oblast has become one of the Russian leaders in terms of the growth rate of the gross regional product and attraction of investments and formation of new development institutions.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the choice and adjustment of development models for Novosibirsk oblast and Novosibirsk have been carried out in the process of regional and municipal strategizing. Of greatest interest is the Program for the Reindustrialization of the Economy of Novosibirsk oblast (Seliverstov, 2017). It was aimed at activating the powerful scientific and innovative potential of the region by creating new high-tech industries here. This program has become a model example of a federal–regional partnership and a system of interaction between government, science, and business in the scientific and technological revival of the Russian region.

Another important vector of the transformations carried out in Novosibirsk oblast in the scientific and technological sphere in recent years has been the implementation of the Akademgorodok 2.0 strategic

<sup>3</sup> The Novosibirsk Scientific Center with 32 academic institutes is the largest in the country. The concentration of scientific personnel in Novosibirsk is 1.5 times higher than the national figure.



initiative, which is a program for the development of the Novosibirsk Scientific Center as a territory with a high concentration of research and development (Seliverstov, 2020).

The choice and implementation of new models for the development of Novosibirsk oblast were carried out in the absence of the largest vertically integrated companies on its territory, which, as a rule, are the main investors in the Russian regions. The region became one of the few Siberian territories where large business structures did not have a significant impact on the processes of regional development. This served only for the benefit of the region. Local authorities had to rely only on their own resources, develop their own development models, and adapt them to changing external conditions.

***Kemerovo oblast (Kuzbass) as a model example of the raw material orientation of the Siberian region.***<sup>4</sup> The models of socioeconomic development of Kuzbass have always been based on large economic projects implemented by the state. Their implementation led to the fact that in the period of 1960–1975 the region was one of the most economically prosperous regions of the USSR. However, in the 1980s, Kuzbass turned into a problem area. The accelerated growth of coal production did not become a driver of economic development, and market mechanisms did not work to harmonize the interests of the region, its population, and the coal business.

The region tried to find its place in the economic policy of Russia by developing various strategic documents. However, none of them proposed a development model that would fit Kuzbass into the world and all-Russian trends. The federal center helped Kemerovo oblast only by providing various preferences to the coal business (soft loans and special tariff rates). These increased the profits of the owners of coal assets, but this was accompanied by a decrease in the standard of living of the population of the region.

In recent years, there have been attempts to determine the place and role of Kuzbass once again in the economic policy of Russia while developing new versions of the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of Kemerovo Oblast for the Period up to 2035. They proclaimed the return of the status of the industrial center of Russia to Kuzbass as a basic economic idea. However, unfortunately, the developers of these strategies failed to catch and evaluate external shocks that can affect both the genetics of the existing socioeconomic system of the region and the system of program and design decisions at all levels of planning and forecasting: corporate, state, and interstate. Such shocks include the global climate agenda and global decarbonization, which implies a transition to a low-carbon model of economic development. In recent

years, a new shock associated with the coronavirus pandemic has emerged. It was these shocks that stopped even the small economic growth that had been observed in previous years in Kemerovo oblast.

Studies conducted at the Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kryukov et al., 2020) have shown that modern threats to the economic development of Kemerovo oblast are the result of the paradigm and model of development of the region chosen in the 2000s, based on ideas about the growing importance of coal in the Russian and world economy. These forecasts were not correct; as a result, the more coal was mined in the region, the lower its economic potential and the standard of living of the population became. The Kuzbass model of competitiveness, in fact, turned out to be tied to the export model of the coal business: with the growth of coal prices, indicators of competitiveness and related volumetric (gross) indicators grow; with a fall, there is a multiplicative decrease in the final indicators.

At the same time, these studies have shown that in relation to Kemerovo oblast, it is unreasonable to oppose the resource and innovative ways of economic development. Neither at present nor in the foreseeable future is there a serious alternative to the raw material (primarily coal) route in Kuzbass. The main task to be solved by the region is not to abandon the resource direction of growth, but to form its new quality, which includes not so much monetization as the socialization of the resulting effects. That is, the conversion of innovations not only into the profit of investors, but also into the quality of life of the population.

The new doctrine of the development of Kuzbass should be based on the idea that resources (including coal) have a colossal socioeconomic value and the region has the right to receive decent royalties. Coal mining, which has not become a driver for the development of the Kuzbass economy over the past decades, should now try to take on the role of its transformer.

In general, Kemerovo oblast faced a typical problem of the world's raw material regions with depleting reserves or regions with a high concentration of heavy industry enterprises that have lost competitiveness due to their inability to fit into high-tech trends. However, many of these regions have made the transition to new development models associated with the re-specialization of production. See a very indicative example of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh urban agglomeration (United States).

Comparing the development models of the Novosibirsk and Kemerovo regions and their management systems, the authors (Kryukov et al., 2020) understood that Kemerovo oblast, with its “weighted” and actually highly specialized economic structure, is in a less advantageous position than Novosibirsk oblast. In the latter, the strong diversification of the economic

<sup>4</sup> This part of the section was prepared jointly with Doctor of Economics Yu.A. Fridman.

**Table 1.** The ranks and dynamics of economic ratings of the Novosibirsk and Kemerovo oblasts

Regional rating	Novosibirsk oblast		Kemerovo oblast	
Rating of Russian regions by the degree of intensity of competition and the state of the competitive environment ( <i>Federal Antimonopoly Service of Russia</i> )	1 (2015)	—	21–23 (2015)	—
National Infrastructure Award “ROSINFRA” ( <i>PPP Development Center</i> )	1 (2015)	1	—	—
Competition of innovative territorial clusters ( <i>Ministry of Economic Development of Russia</i> )	3 (2015)	—	—	—
All-Russian rating of regions by the level of PPP development ( <i>PPP Development Center, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation</i> )	4 (2015)	7 (2018)	52 (2015)	36 (2018)
Rating of innovative development of Russian regions ( <i>Association of Innovative Regions of Russia</i> )	10 (2015)	6 (2018)	60 (2015)	56 (2018)
Russian regional innovation index ( <i>HSE University</i> )	11 (2015)	9 (2019)	40 (2015)	35 (2019)
Rating of investment attractiveness of regions ( <i>RA expert</i> )	(2015)	(2020)	(2015)	(2020)
— potential rank	15	15	16	17
— risk rank	19	20	56	60
National investment climate rating ( <i>Agency for Strategic Initiatives</i> )	57 (2015)	19 (2020)	21 (2015)	45 (2020)

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from rating agencies.

structure of the region and the absence of giant enterprises or monopoly industries gave more room for economic maneuvers. In Kemerovo oblast, these were difficult due to the impossibility of a one-time rejection of the dominant coal development, both because of the dependence of the regional authorities on the coal lobby and because of the need to solve the social problems of miners and their families.

Without delving into the analysis of economic indicators, we note that the orientation of Novosibirsk and Kemerovo oblasts towards different development models objectively resulted in their different performances. Thus, over the past 2 decades in Novosibirsk oblast, the average annual growth rate of the gross regional product was 1.5–2 times higher on average than in Kemerovo oblast.

Various aspects of the implementation of the development models of the two regions reflect the performance ratings of the federal subjects (see Table 1). For all their conventionality, they, first, mark the greater efficiency, innovative orientation, and investment attractiveness of Novosibirsk oblast compared to Kemerovo oblast, and second, the significantly greater dynamism of positive changes in the first region.

Thus, a comparison of two neighboring Siberian regions quite convincingly proves the importance of choosing adequate doctrines and development strategies in the process of regional strategizing, on the basis of which the management policies of local authorities are subsequently implemented. Of course, in these policies, regional authorities are limited by the rigid framework of federal legislation, the national model of economic development, as well as the business support system and intergovernmental relations. All these external conditions are rather harsh, archaic, and inefficient. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for regional authorities and business representatives to try to change the existing institutional environment (i.e., laws, norms, and rules of economic, investment, as well as social and regional policies) based on legislative initiatives through consolidated efforts with other regions. The result of its changes would be not only the acceleration of the development of regions, but also the harmonization of Russia’s spatial development through the improvement of interbudgetary and inter-regional relations and relations between the federal center and the regions.

## A DIGEST OF NEW STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA

As noted above, Russia still cannot find and implement an effective model of its spatial organization. In the conditions of the virtual absence of the state regional policy, its effective institutions, institutional conditions, and implementation mechanisms, the regulation of the processes of the country's spatial development is carried out to a large extent by formal and informal procedures of manual control by the highest officials of the state. One of the elements of manual control is the preliminary release of certain information in the media in order to assess the reaction of the Russian (or world) community to certain possible initiatives. In this regard, some statements are curious, to which we will give brief comments.

***On the need to “link” the Russian space.*** On December 23, 2020, at a joint meeting of the State Council and the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects, the President of Russia stated that it was necessary to work on the issue of connecting the remote territories of Russia, pointing out that it was important to “link together in terms of infrastructure” the vast expanses of the Far East. In (Seliverstov, 2021), on the one hand, the actual expediency of strengthening the connectivity of the Siberian and Far Eastern space was analyzed, on the other hand, the managerial and institutional barriers along this path. It was shown that this will require both a broader and more comprehensive approach and large financial and material resources for the implementation of the connectivity policy, as well as strong changes in regional policy and in its institutions and mechanisms. It is obvious that the connectivity of space can only be strengthened by the implementation of major interregional projects (and not only transport and infrastructure projects). At the same time, Russian science and regional scientific and innovative systems can become real system-forming foundations for the intellectual and cultural unity of the country's macroregions.

***On the inclusion of Central and Eastern Siberia in the eastern vector of the spatial development of Russia.*** For the first time in post-Soviet history, the accelerated development of Siberia and the Far East as the main strategic priority for Russia for the entire 21st century was proclaimed in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly in 2013. However, as shown above, in subsequent years this priority was concentrated only in the Far East. Six years later, at a meeting of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, V.V. Putin noted: “Today we need to think about the rise of the vast territories of Central and Eastern Siberia ... The development of spaces in Central and Eastern Siberia, and not as a raw material base, but as a scientific and industrial center, should make this region a link between the European part of Russia and the Far East, between the markets of China, the Asia-Pacific

countries, Europe, ... to attract fresh, well-trained labor resources here.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, on the one hand, the regions of Central and Eastern Siberia and its human potential should significantly strengthen the potential of the eastern vector in its Chinese direction, and on the other hand, the prospective development of these regions should be carried out by switching to an innovative development path and creating powerful scientific and industrial centers in their territories.

The fact that the movement in this direction is gradually beginning is evidenced by the federal support for the Novosibirsk and Tomsk research centers as territories with a high concentration of research and development, the Akademgorodok 2.0 Program (Seliverstov, 2020), and the inclusion of Novosibirsk and Tomsk State Universities in the Priority–2030 federal program. We also note the Yenisey Siberia strategic initiative implemented in the form of a comprehensive investment project and the approval of the Strategy for the socioeconomic development of the Angara–Yenisey macroregion for the period up to 2035 (despite its significant shortcomings noted above).

***On the use of the cluster approach in the development of Siberia.*** This idea was announced in January 2022 by Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation V. Abramchenko at a meeting on the accelerated development of Siberia with relevant departments.<sup>6</sup> It was proposed to include eight industrial clusters in the strategy for the development of Siberia (Forest, Wood Chemistry and Wood Processing; Aluminum Processing; Nonferrous and Rare Earth Metals; Precious Metals; Tourism; Agriculture and Food Industry; Oil and Gas; and Coal). It is expected that, together with existing models for increasing investment activity, cluster projects will create more than 450 000 jobs by 2030 and attract more than 9 trillion rubles.

It is still difficult to say whether such an initiative is a simple rebranding of the traditional branches of Siberia's specialization, or whether there is actually a new cluster policy behind it, designed to promote the modernization of the socioeconomic development of Siberian territories. So far, there are no effective examples of regional clustering in Russia (perhaps, with the exception of the automobile proto-cluster of Kaluga oblast). The real cluster policy is based on new ways of supporting, creating, and interacting with network associations of enterprises and organizations. One fundamentally important characteristic of clusters is the stability of intracluster interactions, when cluster members simultaneously compete and interact with each other. An indispensable attribute of clusters

<sup>5</sup> Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, June 7, 2019. <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60707>.

<sup>6</sup> Victoria Abramchenko: The cluster approach will be used in the development of Siberia, Russian Government, January 28, 2022. <http://government.ru/news/44430/>.

should be a specialized organization that coordinates relations and represents the interests of the participants. It also performs the functions of operational management and project office. Thus far, no such attributes have been recorded in the selected clusters of Siberia. Moreover, recently the cluster agenda has been practically excluded from the activities of the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Russia.

***On the construction of new million-plus cities in Siberia.*** Recently, the idea has been circulated that three to five cities with a population of 300 000 to 1 million people should appear in Central Siberia, which should specialize in a particular sector of the economy. Thus, it is expected that one of these cities can be built between Bratsk and Krasnoyarsk (we are talking about an industrial center in the field of copper mining and copper metallurgy and electrical engineering with an attractive economy and long-term growth potential). In the same area, the Aluminum Valley cluster can be created, where high value-added products will be produced. It is even proposed that the headquarters of the largest Russian companies move to these cities, which would become an additional incentive for the influx of residents. Without rejecting these proposals in principle, we note, however, that some do not yet have a serious scientific justification.

It is reasonable to believe that proposals for the creation of new clusters and new million-plus cities in Central Siberia are based on the Concept for the Development of the Angara-Yenisey Macroregion. In this concept a significant increase in the population of the Angara-Yenisey macroregion and the number of new jobs is justified. Thus, the New Paradigm scenario assumes the formation in its southern part, northeast of Minusinsk, of a so-called new city (according to the concept of “new cities of the world”) with a population of approximately 4 million people by 2050.

However, for all the temptation of these proposals and developments, it should be recognized that they will face a harsh reality in terms of their perception by both Russian business and the population ready (or not ready) to participate in the grandiose project of resettlement in new cities of Central Siberia. There are many questions here. Who will finance the construction of housing, engineering infrastructure facilities in new Siberian cities and the entire transport infrastructure, the state or business, and on what terms? What special benefits should be provided to the future residents of these cities for resettlement and, again, from what sources? What cities and regions of Russia and Siberia should become donors of this Siberian migration epic? Most importantly, can tens and hundreds of thousands of new jobs be created in these new Siberian cities? The pitfalls of the concept of new million-plus cities in Siberia have been considered in sufficient detail by V.N. Leksin.<sup>7</sup>

However, local initiatives of the federal subjects to form in their territory relatively compact (with a population of no more than 20 000–50 000 people) new cities, towns, or urban areas with the concentration of segments of the new economy in them can be implemented. The Smart City project has a serious chance of success, that is, a new settlement area in the vicinity of the Novosibirsk Akademgorodok with a specialization in information technology and high-tech medicine.<sup>8</sup>

As for references to foreign experience in creating new cities, to which the AYM Concept appeals, only China, with its gigantic resources, can afford the construction of “ghost cities” in its northeastern and other territories. Most likely, the issue here is not strategic miscalculations of Chinese designers and urban planners. Most of these empty cities are located in the autonomous regions of the PRC and in the border areas, and here other factors and conditions play a role: the ethno-national policy of the PRC, geopolitical interests, etc.

Meanwhile, the idea of new million-plus cities seems to be beginning to take hold of the administrative elites of Siberia. Thus, S.E. Tsvilev, Governor of Kemerovo oblast, proposes to create two million-plus cities in Kuzbass on the basis of Kemerovo and Novokuznetsk, while their population should almost double.

Here again, questions arise. Why is this necessary at all, under what conditions should these two new million-plus cities appear in Kuzbass, and what will this give their population? What new productions can be placed here and why? How will this affect the existing unfavorable environmental situation in Kemerovo and Novokuznetsk? The list goes on. Most importantly, what will make people move to these cities, which even now can hardly be called the standard of a comfortable and environmentally friendly life and work? The idea of turning Irkutsk into a million-plus city has been circulated for a long time, and it is possible that in the wake of such events it will be revived.

In the conclusion of this brief digest, we note the following statement by the Russian President, who, during the annual direct line on June 30, 2021, said: “In fact, I think that certain federal structures should be transferred to Siberia, or at least those of our large companies should be transferred there and head offices that operate in Siberia, and, unfortunately, pay the main taxes in Moscow.”<sup>9</sup> It took several decades for the leadership of the country, at least in words, to

<sup>7</sup> There is a job, there is a city: A. Ivanter’s interview with V.N. Leksin in the magazine *Expert*, September 20, 2021. <https://expert.ru/expert/2021/39/yest-rabota-yest-gorod/>.

<sup>8</sup> Travina, I., A smart enclave or a self-sufficient city? <http://www.akademgorodok2.ru/umnyj-anMav-ili-samodostatochnyj-gorod/>.

<sup>9</sup> Direct line with Vladimir Putin, June 30, 2021. <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65973>.

implicitly support this obvious idea, which has been advocated by the scientific community since the early 1990s. However, one question remains open: Will the true owners of the Siberian territories, i.e., the largest state corporations and vertically integrated companies represented by their leaders, support it?

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a question mark in the title of the article. The analysis shows that the state of spatial development and regional policy of Russia until the spring of 2022 should most likely be assessed as being intermediate between the extreme assessments of "running in place or readiness for a sprint." On the one hand, during the past five-year period there were no great achievements in the field of modernization of the country's spatial arrangement, except for the emerging implementation of its eastern vector, which, as shown above, is not happening without problems. Many unresolved issues of the regional policy of the state and the spatial development of the country are determined by the crisis state of the national economy and the ongoing effect of anti-Russian sanctions. Of course, the coronavirus pandemic as the new global threat has significantly hampered the transformation of the Russian economic and social space. In the context of the imperfection of the regulatory and legal framework of regional policy, state regulation of the country's territorial development, as before, is actually carried out in manual control mode.

On the other hand, even in these exceptionally difficult conditions, new strategic initiatives and new trends gradually began to emerge, which, until the end of 2021, provided grounds for cautious optimism regarding Russia's regional policy and spatial development. Let us note some of them.

(1) A crucial national-level strategic document has appeared in the country, which has a real impact on the development of the largest territories of Russia. We are talking about the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the Period up to 2035, approved in October 2020.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to the Spatial Development Strategy of the Russian Federation, the main goals and objectives of the development of this macroregion are clearly formulated here both in the context of ensuring the national security of the country and from the standpoint of developing business and living conditions in it (including the indigenous peoples of the North and the Arctic).

(2) Gradually, the attention of the state to the problems of the development of Asian Russia begins to

focus on supporting not only the Far East, but also Central and Southern Siberia.

(3) New associative forms of interaction between regions began to take shape (for example, the Association of Innovative Regions of Russia).

(4) The quality of regional and municipal strategic planning and management is gradually improving. In the federal subjects, the importance of new development institutions is increasingly felt, and a number of municipalities are successfully implementing elements of the smart city concept.

It is unlikely that the complex of these measures (even if they are successfully implemented) can be characterized as the beginning of a breakthrough in the spatial development of the Russian Federation. However, still, against the background of the long practice of the amorphous regional policy of post-Soviet Russia, which was reduced only to the implementation of projects for image purposes in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan, in other selected regions of the European part of the country (especially in the republics of the North Caucasus), the ongoing changes gave rise to cautious optimism. It remained to be hoped that Russian science would learn about these innovations not from the mass media but would be directly involved in the justification and examination of strategic directions for the modernization of the socioeconomic, scientific-technological, infrastructural, and ethno-national spaces of Russia.

This article, published in Russian at the end of 2021, ended on this semi-optimistic note. The cultural blockade of Russia, following the special military operation started in late-February, has radically changed the situation in the country. Conclusions, assessments, scenarios for its development (including spatial ones) have become either irrelevant or should be substantially revised considering the tectonic shifts that occurred in the functioning of the Russian socioeconomic and military-political system.

Here, of course, elements of anti-crisis management and the country's adaptation to the mobilization development scenario, formed during the fight against the pandemic (self-reliance, import substitution, increased reactivity, and efficiency of public administration, etc.), will be in demand. For Russia, the fight against the coronavirus crisis has become a kind of dress rehearsal for its functioning in the context of a global confrontation with Western countries and these new risks and threats will most likely affect the processes of the country's spatial development and state regional policy.

Individual consequences of these processes can be traced even now. Thus, experts estimate that Russian regions and cities with a high concentration of automotive and metallurgy enterprises will find themselves in a particularly difficult situation. From the standpoint of this article, it is important to note that the intensification of the eastern vector of the spatial

<sup>10</sup>Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of October 26, 2020 No. 645 On the strategy for the development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and ensuring national security for the period up to 2035. <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/45972>.

development of Russia and its cross-border interactions, which emerged over the last five years, will obviously intensify in the new conditions, and not only in the direction of China, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea but also the neighboring countries of Central Asia, as well as India and Indonesia. An industry transformation of the eastern vector should be expected: along with the strengthening of its oil and gas segment, the processes of import substitution that have begun should stimulate the activity of high-tech enterprises, scientific organizations and universities in the southern and central regions of Siberia. The leading role in the formation of a new economy of import substitution can be played by regional scientific and innovative systems (Seliverstov, 2020).

The departure of Western investors and new budgetary restrictions will significantly limit the implementation of large-scale projects for the transformation of the Russian space. The idea of new Siberian million-plus cities will also be shelved indefinitely. However, it seems that the hypothesis of academician V.V. Kuleshov will be in demand, who noted a decade ago that in conditions of turbulence and global instability, the territory of Siberia is becoming the most important strategic spatial resource of Russia. Therefore, in (Kuleshov and Seliverstov, 2018) it was noted that the state should pay special attention to the need to create a new center of economic activity of the Russian Federation in the south—central part of Siberia, in which political, social, environmental, demographic, and ethnic risks are relatively minimized. This mesoregion can take over the functions of the center of innovative production in the east of the country, as well as the driver of Russia's interaction with the countries of Central and Northeast Asia.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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