GLOBAL WORLD AND ITS TRANSFORMATIONS

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REVOLUTIONS AS A FACTOR IN THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE WORLD SYSTEM *

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At present the World System and world order are undergoing dramatic transformations. Revolutions definitely will be an integral part of these systemic changes; therefore, their numbers as well as the world-system effect are likely to be significant. In this article, the authors analyze in what way the twenty-first century revolutions examined in this article be connected with the transformations of the World System and world order. The authors' argument is based on the theory of the periodical catch-ups experienced by the political component of the World System, which tends to lag behind the economic component. Such gaps are eventually bridged, but not in a smooth way. On the contrary, this catch-up is likely to be rather complex, turbulent and conflictive. The twentyfirst century revolutions appear to be part of a broad and conflict-ridden process of catch-up of the World-System's political component to its economic component. This catch-up provokes strong structural transformations, which the authors describe as the reconfiguration of the World System. They think that with the Arab Spring there started a reconfiguration of the World System that will remain associated with revolutionary processes in the twenty-first century. The authors expect that in connection with the political catch-up the number of revolutions as well as their role as a means of the world-system transformation will not decrease, but in some respects may even increase noticeably. Anton Grinin and Leonid Grinin analyze the future of revolutions in terms of their typology and also of some other aspects, namely: 1) the evaluation of their number in comparison with the previous period; 2) their role as a tool defining the future progress of societies and the World System; 3) the scale and power of revolutions; 4) the possibility of revolutionary waves, and 5) possible changes of the forms of revolutionary events.

Recommended citation: Grinin, A., Grinin L. The Twenty-First Century Revolutions as a Factor in the Reconfiguration of the World System. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, November 2023, pp. 3–26. DOI: 10.30884/jogs/2023.02.01.

Keywords: World System, world order, world-system effect, revolutionary processes, revolutionary waves, reconfiguration of the World System, globalization, turbulent and conflictive epoch.

1. Preliminary Remarks

Starting from 2009, we have been studying the processes of the World System transformation and have come to the conclusion that in the coming decades the international system will begin to transform more rapidly and more profoundly. Consequently, we are entering a period of disequilibrium, when new structural and systemic solutions are being sought within the World System. We have also come to the further conclusion that the turbulent events in the Arab world may well be regarded as the beginning of a global reconfiguration of the World System, leading to a radical shift. The most general cause of this reconfiguration, as we will show below, is connected with the lag of the World System's political component behind its economic component, which has been overtaking it. The catching up of the political component to the economic one means a rather long, turbulent and conflictive period for the World System (see Grinin, Korotayev 2010b: 173; see also Grinin 2009b, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Grinin, Korotayev 2011, 2012a, 2016; Grinin et al. 2017; see also Grinin 2022c, 2022d, 2022e).

Since February 2022, the World System has entered a new phase of development. Its reconfiguration, associated with the weakening of the American dominance, which has been taking place since at least 2008 (since the beginning of the global crisis), has accelerated. The uncertainty about the outcome of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine (SVO), the split in the world, the collapse of the world economy into a number of economic zones, the prospect of the formation of financial and monetary zones and other processes open up other options for the transformation of the world order than those that seemed dominant only yesterday.

The analysis of the causes of the Arab Spring has brought us to the idea that some revolutionary waves are also connected with the objective necessity of the reconfiguration of the World System, which is determined by the most rapid economic changes, which leave behind political transformations, and all this leads to strong tensions and imbalances.

In some our works we elaborate these ideas with regard to such revolutionary waves (e.g., Grinin 2022a; Grinin and Grinin 2022b; Goldstone et al. 2023; Ustyuzhanin et al. 2021). In our opinion, we can consider some revolutionary waves as a way of reducing the imbalance between the political and economic dimensions, namely the wave of 1848, with its economic transformations connected with industrialization and the development of capitalism, which was obviously ahead of the political ones (see Grinin 2022a); the wave of 1905–1911 in the semi-peripheral countries of Eurasia and Mexico (Grinin and Grinin 2022a); and also the wave of the Arab Spring (see Grinin and Korotayev 2022a, 2022b; see also Beck 2014). Revolutions then appear as part of a broad and conflict-ridden process of the political component of the World System catching up with its economic component (see Grinin, Issaev, Korotayev 2016; Grinin, Korotayev, and Tausch 2019).

This article presents the results of this analysis, together with some related forecasts, in particular, about how these transformations can be linked to the revolutions of the twenty-first century.

2. Reconfiguration of the World System and its Manifestations

As we have already mentioned, rapid, systemic economic development sooner or later demands political changes in order to 'pull up' the political system to an appropriate level. Otherwise, a society faces growing internal tensions and contradictions. And the more these are perceived, the greater the possibility of a revolutionary crisis. Meanwhile, in many societies, the necessary transformations of political and social institutions are hampered by state repression and the elite pursuing its interests. This situation of a considerable gap between the levels of technological and economic development on the one hand, and the backwardness of the political system on the other, can be found in many societies during periods of growing revolutionary crisis. This lag, when one vector lags behind the other, leads to various imbalances which the opposition can define as 'defects of the regime', contributing to the emergence of opposition, protest, and revolutionary ideologies. In the course of historical development, this gap has become apparent at the level of certain regions, and this could trigger waves of revolutions, as happened, for example, in Western Europe in 1848 and in Russia and Asia in 1905-1911. As the process of globalization unfolded, this gap between economic development (globalization) and institutional changes at the level of international relations and global order (political globalization) became perceptible within the World System in general. And this, in our opinion, becomes the source of the internal crisis of the World System and its considerable transformations.¹

By the 2010s, economic and financial globalization had advanced considerably, in contrast to international legal and political globalization. While international trade, financial flows and credit were increasingly transforming economic interdependence and integration as well as income opportunities around the world, political systems remained very different and, in some cases, either quite traditional or unchanged for many decades, continuing to divide the World System into separate or even hostile parts. In other words, in the current pattern of globalization, political processes lag behind the economic ones.

Can the political component of the World System lag even further behind the economic component in the coming decades? The logic here is quite obvious: within social systems, the lag cannot be infinite; when the gap becomes too large, a period of political catching up begins. In this situation, the pace of economic development would slow down due to a crisis, as happened in 2008, for example. It is very important to note that the lag of social and political development behind economic growth is only one cause of past, current and future crises (Grinin, Korotayev, and Tsirel 2011). However, it will not become clear all at once. Combined with other causes (in particular the dynamics of the famous Kondratieff cycles, which predict an imminent slowdown in growth [e.g. Grinin and Grinin 2014; Grinin, Grinin, Korotayev 2017]), this may provide a basis for predicting that global economic development in the next 15–20 years will most probably be slower than in the previous period (Grinin and Korotayev 2010b: 172–174; see also Grinin 2009b, 2010, 2012b; Grinin, Korotayev 2012b, 2015a; Grinin, Korotayev, Tausch 2016). But while economic globalization and development will slow down, political transformations will intensify.

Thus, we do believe that over the next two decades the political component of the World System is likely to somehow catch up with the economic component, leading to major structural changes. We have called this process *the reconfiguration of the World System*. This reconfiguration can occur in a variety of ways (see below), including various protest and revolutionary actions (see Grinin and Korotayev 2022b; Korotayev, Is-

saev *et al.* 2022; Korotayev, Shishkina *et al.* 2022; see also Grinin 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2012a; Grinin and Korotayev 2010b, 2012b, 2015b). This idea may be exemplified by the wave of revolutionary movements around the world in 2019 (see Selbin 2022). Changes that can quickly engulf whole clusters of societies also remain possible.

But how will this catch-up proceed? Of course, the way in which the catching-up will take place is very important. Catch-up implies political development at a rather high speed, which may be accompanied by tensions, hairpin bends, and cataclysms; and it has become quite clear that this is accompanied by the involvement of large groups of countries in turbulent events. We therefore suppose that the catching-up of the World System's political component is likely to be a rather turbulent period. Such catching-up is rarely smooth, but rather it takes place in a jerky way.

It is important to note that this catching-up can take place in different ways. There was a possibility of realizing this catching-up through the rapid development of the political aspects of globalization, in which case the general process of political globalization would move forward. However, this way is not working at the moment because of the Special Military Operation and the threat of a bigger war. The second way is through the degradation (regression) of the economic component of globalization, such as the return to protectionism, the importance of international organizations, agreements, *etc.*, in other words, through the regression of the economic component of globalization to its political component. In this case, the general progress of globalization will be reversed. This way was realized before the Special Military Operation, but after it we can observe the third way, the worst one. We see the degradation of both the economic and political components of globalization and its transformation into deglobalization (see also below). And this means not only the destruction of the old world order for the sake of preparing the formation of the new one, but the intensification of this process (see also below).

We argue that the turbulent events in the Arab countries after 2010 launched the reconfiguration of the World System.² The events in the Near and Middle East and in other regions, especially in Ukraine, but also in the Far East (Grinin 2014), increasingly convince us that the reconfiguration of the world has started and is proceeding quite actively (see Derluguian and Hovhannisyan 2022; Sadovskaya *et al.* 2022; Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2022; Chase-Dunn and Nagy 2022; Goldstone *et al.* 2022a). We consider these crises precisely as crises of reconfiguration, which are also geopolitical and require a change in the world order. At the same time, the emergence of powerful and probably sudden crises in certain societies or regions is becoming more and more likely. In different countries, regions, and situations, the processes of reconfiguration may manifest themselves in quite different (and often unpredictable) ways. Their suddenness may resemble that of an earthquake. And, to continue the geological analogy, just as tectonic shifts occur along the lines of the most unstable regions of the earth's crust and at the boundaries of tectonic plates, such crises of reconfiguration also occur in the least stable regions and societies at the junctions of geopolitical 'plates.'

The processes of reconfiguration can manifest themselves in the most unexpected places.⁴ It is especially important that deep crises can arise at the center of the World System (both in the US and Europe) and elsewhere, as the socio-political map of possible tectonic shifts needs to be rethought today. We see such turbulent and unexpected twists and turns in the UK, which has left the EU; in Spain in relation to the referendum in Catalonia; and in the USA, where the country is still seething as a result of Donald

Trump's coming to power, and his policies, including trade wars, which not only led to increasing tensions in different parts of the world, but also contributed to the BLM protests in 2020, which have also spread around the world; all these are elements of such a reconfiguration (see Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022a). Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a truly global event, which (together with an economic crisis and an unexpected fall in oil prices) has contributed significantly to the destruction of the old world order – direct examples of the contribution of COVID-19 to the emergence of revolutionary processes are events in Kyrgyzstan in 2020 (see Ivanov 2022), as well as those in Belarus in 2020, or in Cuba in 2021 (on the general influence of the pandemic on the World System, on economic, social and political life, see Grinin 2020a; Irshad 2020; Korotayev *et al.* 2020; Widdowson 2021; Rodrigue 2021). Thus, in various parts of the world, the current denial of basic human rights, the closing of borders, the unexplored use of artificial intelligence, *etc.*, combined with recession, will give impetus to further significant transformations.

3. The Reasons for and Mechanisms of Reconfiguration. The Manifestations of Reconfiguration Tensions and Crises

Economic aspects. The process of reconfiguration of the World System is very complicated and has different causes in different aspects. The above-mentioned imbalances between economic development and the development of political institutions appear at different levels: in individual societies, at the regional level and at the world-system level. At that, in each case, the global and local causes and peculiarities create a unique combination of contradictions and problems. In this article we will discuss only the most important, from our point of view, causes and mechanisms of the process of reconfiguration.

Let us start with the fact that we are currently witnessing the weakening of the US economic role as the World System hegemon. This process has been going on for quite a long time (see, *e.g.*, Kissinger 2001, 2014; Buchanan 2002; Kupchan 2002; Todd 2003; Wallerstein 2003; Mandelbaum 2005; Kennedy 2008; Zakaria 2008; NIC 2008, 2012; Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2011; Reich and Lebow 2014; Grinin 2010; Grinin, Korotayev 2010a, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015b, 2016; Grinin *et al.* 2017; Grinin, Ilyin, Andreev 2016; Grinin, Tsirel, Korotayev 2015; for details see Chase-Dunn and Nagy 2022; Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2022). Make America great again' – Donald Trump's slogan directly evidences the loss of previous leadership and suggests that the situation in the world will continue to exacerbate America's decline (Grinin and Korotayev 2020; Olsen 2021).

The loss of the leading role of the USA will mean a profound and rather complicated critical transformation of the World System itself, the immediate consequences of which are quite unclear. Undoubtedly, the fate of the world in the coming decades will depend to a large extent on the vector of America's development, its policies and the ups and downs it may face along the way. We have mentioned elsewhere (Grinin 2005, 2015; Grinin, Korotayev 2015b, 2020; Grinin et al. 2017), that the struggle of the greater part of the world community with the growing egoism of the United States, which is unwilling to recognize the interests of other countries, will be the main intrigue of current global development. During Donald Trump's presidency, this has been particularly evident, with the United States ignoring or even antagonizing its main geopolitical allies and their interests. This is why we have pointed out that it is this weakening of US leadership that has caused the 'disorder' in the world over the past years; moreover, it is the

US's own actions that have the greatest impact on this situation (Grinin, Ilyin, Andreev 2016; Grinin *et al.* 2017; Carpenter 2023; Roussinos 2023).

On the basis of the above, two global developmental vectors can be distinguished that are driving the forthcoming reconfiguration. The first is the weakening of the former center of the World System (the USA and the West in general). The second is the simultaneous strengthening of the positions of a number of peripheral countries and, more generally, the increasing role of developing countries in the global economy and politics. These two opposing trends together constitute a single process that we have denoted as 'the Great Convergence' (Grinin and Korotayev 2014b, 2015a; Korotayev, Goldstone, Zinkina 2015; Grinin 2021; see also below). As a result, the process of 'reconfiguration' of the World System is intensifying.

The radically changing balance of the world economic power creates objective conditions for a revision of the world order (see Mearsheimer 2001; Andersen and Wohlforth 2021). However, it does not automatically lead to a change in the military-political balance. Nevertheless, the former order based on US hegemony is gradually weakening and conditions for the creation of a new world order are being created (Grinin 2016; Grinin, Ilyin, Andreev 2016; Grinin, Grinin, Korotayev 2021). Unfortunately, this process is taking place in a 'natural' way, in both spontaneously and destructively.

As has already been said, the catching-up of the political component is a painful, turbulent and conflict-ridden process; and, most importantly for us, at least partly a revolutionary process. Such crises and revolutionary movements can occur both in the weakening World-System core and in its strengthening periphery. In the case of the core, the causes are contradictions between old ambitions (needs) and reduced capacities and opportunities; and in case of the periphery, they are growing disparities between their rapidly growing economies and technologies, on the one hand, and archaic elements of their political and social systems, on the other.

Let us point out that these problems have a major impact on international relations and the changing world order. This is particularly important and obvious in the case of the USA, where the internal political struggle between the parties is taking on the character of a hybrid civil war. This not only further weakens the country, but also makes its foreign policy a victim of domestic political struggles. At the same time, the US still tries to crush its rivals and opponents in the world by various means (also taking on the character of a hybrid war), thus contributing to the destruction of the world order. In the context of the US refusal to fulfil several signed and long implemented international agreements, globalization in its old version has come to a standstill. As a result, economic globalization is regressing (e.g., the introduction of import tariffs and the decline of the WTO), while the political globalization gradually clears its path. Thus, the process of reconfiguration of the World System led first to the inhibition and rollback of globalization (see Grinin, Korotayev 2020; Grinin, Grinin, and Korotayev 2021), and then to deglobalization. Today, we are witnessing the fragmentation of the World System with the prospect of its final disintegration into hostile, rival zones, similar to what happened in the postwar period. However, we believe that a new phase of globalization is certain to emerge. But it is still unclear when the ebb will end and the flow will begin. What is clear is that the next phase of globalization will begin on different grounds, which will be closely related to the principles of the new world order.

We have already pointed out that the catching-up of the political component with the economic component generally implies a transition to a new world order. However, this transition will go through several stages and will take quite a rather long time (Grinin, Grinin, and Korotayev 2021). And one should realize that its initial stage implies the weakening, dismantling and/or destruction of the old order (while the formation of the new one waits for the subsequent stage). For the time being, therefore, we can speak more of a conflict, an unstable and turbulent period, aggravated by depressed economic development. Any political change at regional or national level, and even more so if it leads to revolution, generally contributes to an increase in crisis phenomena in the world. As studies show, the possibility of revolutions and their victory depends in many respects on a world context favorable to them (*e.g.*, Goldfrank 1979; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989; Wickham-Crowley 1992). We believe that the process of the World System reconfiguration is likely to be more favorable than unfavorable for future revolutions.

Technological aspects. There is another fundamental reason defining the turbulent character of the coming epoch. It is connected with the necessary conditions for future technological transformations. Here we proceed from our theory of production principles and productive/technological revolutions (Grinin 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2012c; Grinin L. and Grinin A. 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2020; Grinin and Korotayev 2015a; Grinin L., Grinin A., Korotayev 2017, 2020). At present, a technological revolution is unfolding, which we call as the Cybernetic Revolution (*Ibid.*). We define three major phases within it, and the final phase, according to our estimates, should begin in the 2030s – 2040s and be completed in the 2070s. It will be associated with a powerful new wave of technological innovation.⁸ The initial phase of the Cybernetic Revolution took place between the 1950s and the 1990s. We are currently passing through its second – modernization - phase, in which innovations are widely distributed throughout the World System and the range of new products is expanding enormously. At the same time, the novelty of innovations is lower than in the previous period. However, the marked difference in the level of development between developed and developing countries observed in the 1990s became an obstacle to such a wide distribution of innovations and to the inclusion of new regions in the Cybernetic Revolution. That is why a certain leveling occurred between developed and developing countries, which previously differed considerably in terms of economic indicators. The wide distribution of innovations explains the higher growth rates of the periphery in the 1990s and 2000s, as well as the relocation of production characteristic of previous technological modes. We have denoted this process as the Great Convergence (see Grinin and Korotayev 2014a, 2014b, 2015a; Korotayev, Goldstone, Zinkina 2015). The levelling will actively continue and involve new spheres; but this levelling (as well as the invention of new basic innovations and the rate of innovation diffusion) is already beginning to slow down. Why is this? This is related to the following factors:

- a) the wide diffusion of innovations combined with increasing levels of education and culture, has already led to, and will continue to lead to contradictions between rapidly changing technologies and production levels, on the one hand, and political and social relations (which in many respects remain unchanged) on the other. This contradiction will be observed at two levels: at the country level (especially in the Third World) and at the global level, where new tools for coordinated solutions will be needed;
- b) the advent of a powerful new wave of technological innovation (associated in particular with the spread of self-regulating systems and artificial intelligence) will, in our view, require serious political changes both in the World System in general and in many

individual societies. In other words, there is needed that very catching-up of the political component to the economic component, which we speak about in the present article. Thus, we can expect the growth rates of some countries, such as China and, to a lesser extent, India, the ASEAN countries and others, to slow down in the coming decades, while their domestic problems will worsen. The slowdown is already visible in China, and significant slowdowns can be also observed in Russia, Brazil, Turkey, Mexico, South Africa and others.

4. Revolutions in the Future

The question of the future fate of revolutions in the twenty-first century began to be actively debated at the end of the last century. And it remains relevant. However, as a starting point for our analysis, it is worth mentioning the discussion between Jeff Goodwin and Eric Selbin. Jeff Goodwin (2001) argued that the coming decades are unlikely to see the same scale of revolutionary conflict as the Cold War era because democracy is inhospitable to revolution; that widespread political transformation, that is, the spread democracy, leads to a situation when revolution loses much of its popular appeal and influence, making revolutions less likely (see also Goodwin 1998). Eric Selbin (2001) disagrees with Goodwin and those (Snyder 1999; Colburn 1994 etc.) who argue that the spread of democratization makes revolution less likely in the future because in many countries democratic practices remain weak while inequity and inequality are high. As long as people facing profound and difficult social problems are unable to get sufficient redress through the system, revolutions will take place. He concluded that revolutions may be even more likely in the future than ever before. As we understand the current global processes, Selbin, though somewhat romanticizing revolution, is more correct than Goodwin and others, who thought that the 'fashion' for revolutions had passed (see Selbin 2022; Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022c; see also Selbin 2019). In fact, many revolutions have occurred in the last two decades (as described in Goldstone et al. 2022a). This shows that despite the declining role of revolutions as a progressive tool of change in the political systems of the most advanced societies, many revolutionary causes still remain and will continue to emerge for a long time to come. In fact, current forces can be beneficial to revolutions, given them new impetus. Thus, for a long time the USSR and socialist countries inspired revolutions in different parts of the world (Goldstone et al. 2022b). But in the late 1980s and early 1990s they themselves became the victims of revolutions. The USA, which had been against revolutions for decades, began to actively support color revolutions in different countries in the twenty-first century (see also Mitchell 2022). The right-wing forces that once feared left-wing revolutions began to organize right-wing revolutions against the ruling leftwing regimes in a number of countries, in particular in Latin America.

Thus in connection with the above-mentioned political catch-up process, we expect that the number of revolutions, as well as their role as a means of the world-system transformation, will not decrease significantly and may even increase in some respects. In this context, future revolutions will create a general flow of transformation and reconfiguration of the World System and world order. But, of course, revolutions in large countries with authoritarian regimes, like China and Russia (which are not unlikely), may become particularly important; the same seems to be relevant with respect to revolutionary movements in countries with weak or failing democracies, as well as with waves of revolutions.

4.1. Some types of revolutions in the future

First, it makes sense to consider the role of revolutions in the future, taking into account the types of revolutions that have spread in previous periods.

In particular:

- 1) Revolutions as a means of modernization will continue to play a role in currently underdeveloped countries, because their level of economic development often lags behind political development and because of the high level of inequality in these societies. Such revolutions are usually social (socio-political). At present, many societies are still in the process of modernization. There are many such countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Compared to other regions, there have been quite a number of revolutions, of which social revolutions have been only a small part. In the twenty-first century, the trend towards increasing social protests has been growing (see Korotayev, Shishkina, Khokhlova 2022; Chase-Dunn and Nagy 2022; Sadovskaya et al. 2022; Grinin, Grinin 2022b). So, one may expect that the further development of African countries may lead to a number of socio-political revolutions in the future. We should also bear in mind that Africa will remain the fastest developing continent in demographic (and economic) terms, with huge youth cohorts, and this inevitably leads to the emergence or increase of disparities, confrontations, acute problems and a wealth gap (on the world and African demographic situation and problems including their connection with revolutions see Grinin, Grinin, and Korotayev 2023; Grinin and Korotayev 2023; Ustyuzhanin et al. 2021; Goldstone et al. 2023). Also taking into account the rapidly increasing level of education, all this creates enough material for revolutions.
- 2) Revolutions as a means of democratizing authoritarian societies will continue to prove problematic, often leading to an unconsolidated democracy. As Jack Goldstone points out, the strong driving forces behind the current wave of revolutions are the gains in education, population, and communications in the context of regimes that remain closed and repressive. Consequently, as long as there are modernizing but autocratic regimes, the risks of revolutions will remain (see Selbin 2022 and Mitchell 202).

Thus, a significant number of anti-dictatorship (democratic) revolutions can be expected, as there are still quite a number of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes.¹⁰ Eric Selbin even speaks about Authoritarian Revanchism in the 2000s (see Selbin 2022; see also Selbin 2019). Moreover, countries with weak democracy may experience revolutions that can be described as oligarchic, since leading oligarchic groups may fight for power by revolutionary means (with democratic, social or nationalist slogans). Ukraine may serve a good example here. The number of anti-dictatorship (democratic) revolutions (including color revolutions) has been quite high in recent decades (about color revolutions see Mitchell 2022; see also Aslund and McFaul 2006; Nepstad 2011; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Goldstone 2014; Mitchell 2012; Beck 2014; Lawson 2015; Grinin, Korotayev, Malkov 2010; Grinin, Issaev, Korotayev 2016; Grinin, Korotayev, Tausch 2019), but it is unlikely to decrease in the near future. The anti-presidential protests in Belarus in 2020 prove this. The need for authoritarian regimes to imitate elections makes the election period favorable for revolutionary movements. Thus, some regularities can be seen in the peaks of anti-government activity in such hybrid or semiauthoritarian societies.

Besides, the role of revolutions as a geopolitical weapon may also increase. So, one may expect a number of color revolutions. Latin America in particular will still remain a region with the potential for a considerable number of such revolutions. US influence

on the political balance in Latin America from time to time encourages successful or failed attempts at revolution (the most recent examples are Bolivia and Venezuela). Meanwhile, there emerged new types of analogues of revolutions – constitutional revolutions connected with overthrow of presidents (Argentina, Brazil). 11

Among the remaining authoritarian societies, we can speak of anti-monarchical revolutions in a few countries with a real monarch (see about this Shults 2022 and Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022c), such as, possibly Saudi Arabia (see about this Shults 2022 and Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022c). In addition, anti-communist revolutions may occur in a few communist countries.

- 3) National revolutions for independence are quite possible. Elsewhere we distinguished national revolutions from national-liberation revolutions (Grinin and Grinin 2022a). At present, national-liberation revolutions have less chances of happening (since there are no colonies and in many cases the non-sovereign nations have some representative bodies), but within poly-ethnic nations, struggles for increased autonomy or separation, or for constitutional change to increase the political representation of this or that ethnic/religious group in a parliament or government, are likely to unfold. Future revolutionary movements can be expected in those regions and countries that have a long history of national liberation struggles (such as Kurdistan, Jammu and Kashmir, *etc.*). Perhaps, inter-ethnic wars and genocides will be replaced by national revolutions (Esty *et al.* 1998; Goldstone, Bates *et al.* 2010: Goldstone, Gurr *et al.* 2003).
- 4) Religious revolutions are also quite likely, especially in African countries, although they may be few in other regions, and may include revolutionary protests by the Muslim minority in European countries. Revolutionary uprisings are also quite possible in multi-religious countries; most significantly, such events could become widespread in India, whose nationalist authorities have recently begun to openly oppress other confessions (especially Islam).
- 5) One can even expect a number of revolutionary movements (though possibly without revolutions) in the countries of the World-System core (see below). 13

On the basis of the types of revolutions described, we can say that the revolutionary process in the future will have a number of rather interrelated constituents, showing quite different types of revolutions:

- 1) the continuation of the long-term shift of revolutions away from the World-System core, with the involvement of middle- and low-income countries that 'get ripe' for revolution due to increasing levels of statehood, education, income, and anger at corruption and cronyism (in the future, this will be especially true in Africa).
- 2) The continuation (often interrupted) of the current diffusion of democratization processes and the shift towards nation-states that has been underway since the nine-teenth century. This may imply anti-dictatorship and national revolutions with different causes in different countries. They can often be considered as post-modernization revolutions since they often break out in societies that have reached a relatively high level of development but have serious internal imbalances, as in Ukraine and many other counties of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, or some MENA countries.
- 3) We want to distinguish between revolutions or attempted revolutions that are used as a geopolitical weapon (e.g. the US-backed Euromaidan in Ukraine or the Russian-backed regime in Abkhazia). Their role may be large and grow even more, since, as we have already noted, the ongoing changes in the balance of power in the world are escalating the struggle between major powers, which are in fact waging hybrid wars

against each other. Revolutions in countries that are in the sphere of influence of a rival, with the aim of separating it as an ally, are a rather powerful geopolitical weapon;

- 4) Revolutionary movements emerging in countries close to the core of the World System, linked to its reconfiguration, the economic weakening of the developed countries, their political weakening, *etc*.
- 4.2. The future of revolution in other analytical aspects
- Here we will consider several additional aspects of the future of revolutions, namely: 1) their number in comparison with the previous period; 2) their role as a tool for determining the future progress of the societies of the World System; 3) the depth and power of revolutions; 4) the likelihood of revolutionary waves; and 5) possible changes in the forms of revolutionary events.
- 1) **The number of revolutions**. We expect that in the future (at least in the next two decades) the number of revolutions will hardly decrease significantly compared to the last two decades; moreover, it is not unlikely that their number will increase. This is because their role in the reconfiguration of the World System will be significant and the reconfiguration itself may even accelerate. Such revolutions may become an important factor in the reconfiguration of the World System.
- 2) The role of revolutions as tools of progress. However, this is a complicated issue with three dimensions. The first is the role of revolutions as engines of progress for the individual societies that experience them. We have pointed out (see Grinin 2022b, 2022d, 2022e) that this role diminishes in the course of historical process, while the risk of revolutionary societies falling into a vicious circle of recurrent turnovers increases. Thus, in the future, similar to earlier periods, some countries will enter quite long periods of revolutionary epochs (about such epochs see Goldstone et al. 2022a and Grinin and Grinin 2022a). This means that countries that have experienced revolutions but still lack a stable political system (such as Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgystan) may face them again and fall into revolutionary traps (see Khodunov 2022c; Shevsky 2022; Ivanov 2022). The revolutionary epoch still continues in those Middle Eastern societies that have already experienced revolutions: Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya; this is also relevant for some countries in Tropical Africa. With respect to the latter three, one can speak of an even more difficult period – the epochs of unrest and revolutions. ¹⁴ Revolutions can generate new developmental alternatives for individual societies. But it is important to note that the chances of such new alternatives being better than the development achieved within the authoritarian mode are quite modest. 15

The second aspect is the role of revolutions as a way of creating advanced developmental models that then become examples for other countries to follow (as happened in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries). Here one can confidently argue that the diminishing role of revolutions in the historical process as paving the way for new models of political regimes as well as new trajectories of development, as observed during several decades of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, will certainly continue. There was a long period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries when constitutional revolutions generated models of political regimes that later became models for many countries, thus creating space for the development of both individual countries and the World System in general. We are talking about electoral systems, constitutional democracy, party democracy, and republican regimes, equal rights, *etc.*, which emerged from revolutions and after revolutionary transformations. The social revolutions of the early twentieth century, although they failed to produce societies with higher productivity and

quality of life, nevertheless produced important models of social change, such as the communist revolutions in Russia and China, which were imitated and sometimes implemented in one way or another throughout the world. At present one can hardly expect that any revolutions will give rise to new forms of political or social regime that could serve as an example to be reproduced in other societies. Even Iran, whose Islamic Republic sought to become a model for anti-Western Islamic governance, has had no successful imitators.

The third aspect is the role of revolutions, including the subsequent general change of the World System and its transition to a new state. At that, as was mentioned above, revolutions will become part of the chain of other complicated, conflicting and destructive events of different nature, which will bring the World System to a new character. In any case, the role of revolutions will remain quite significant, so that it will not diminish, and in some aspects it may even increase. Revolutions will be a kind of a battering ram that destroys the old world-system/global order and prepares the ground for the establishment of a new world order. ¹⁶ Thus, even if revolutions will not provide an effective means of reliable systemic progress within nations, they can still play an important role in the progress of the World System as a whole. ¹⁷

As part of the general transformation of the World System, and under the impact of the World-System crisis, revolutionary events can occur even in societies that have previously enjoyed stable democracy, like the USA (see Grinin 2020b). The unprecedented attack on the U.S. Capitol to change the outcome of the 2020 presidential election is an example; should such an event recur on a larger scale in future elections, it could lead to a revolution (successful or failed) in the USA. In this respect too, the importance of revolutions as tools of changing of the order both in individual countries and in the World System may be significant.

On the whole, it can be said that the disruptions caused by revolutions tend to diminish the progressive opportunities of the revolution in each individual case, but nevertheless the role of revolutionary processes in the overall progress of the world system remains rather significant. However, further fate of countries depends on historical fortune. In global terms, the cost of changes for a particular society, in fact, is not so important. And those who dream of revolutions in their own countries should think whether they are ready for their countries' fates to become bargaining chips on the way to global transformations.

- 3) The depth and power of revolutions in specific countries will depend on many conditions. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that a considerable number of future revolutions will lack depth, similar to the recent events in Armenia (see Derluguian and Hovhannisyan 2022) or Bolivia. The declining progressive role of revolutions at the level of individual societies may reduce the depth of these transformations. In these cases, revolutions begin to resemble many military coups, which only change the leader without seriously transforming a society. It is not surprising that the word 'revolution' is increasingly associated with a form of political clickbait (see Mitchell 2022).
- 4) **Waves of revolutions**. We suppose that revolutions may continue to form waves in the future, especially if the world situation changes dramatically. Sharp turns in global affairs can provoke a similar response in a number of countries, all the more so as the possibilities for spreading and sharing information online increase.
- 5) **The forms of revolutions**. Changes in the forms of revolutions seem quite possible, given the above possibility of revolutionary events in the World System core and

in large countries, and also the role of revolutions in the reconfiguration of the World System. Lincoln A. Mitchell believes that we need a new understanding of revolution that is applicable to the twenty-first century (Mitchell 2022). Eric Selbin is right to point out that revolutions may no longer necessarily follow the form (or function) of past instances and processes (see Selbin 2022). Of course, it is rather difficult to make predictions about yet-unseen forms. However, let us emphasize that the current geopolitical confrontation between great powers, including the superpowers, has changed the character of wars. There emerged the so-called hybrid wars, which use different means to influence opponents/rivals, excluding only a hot war. Similarly, with hybrid wars replacing hot wars, we can assume that in a number of cases the hybrid forms of struggle for power may emerge instead of classic revolutions and classic elections, and may include revolutionary actions. Such forms can emerge in developed democratic countries. In particular, the inter-party opposition in the USA from 2016 onwards is a kind of hybrid civil war in which the media and legal actions play a special role, but in which mass mobilization and armed and violent actions have also taken place (Grinin 2020b). Thus, there are grounds to suppose that the struggle for power within the constitutional framework (election campaigns and inter-electoral periods) may be supplemented by some revolutionary events that may come to the fore. Thus, the 6 January 2021 uprising at the Capitol, and in some respects, the BLM movement in 2020 can be seen as a part of the hybrid civil war in the USA mentioned above. These forms of social protest will continue to develop; so perhaps it makes sense not to speak about future revolutions, but about revolutionary-type events (about various forms of revolutionary events in the recent past and future, see also Selbin 2022). These events can mean a permanent process of political change involving opposition between parts of the society or between protesters and the state. Thus, the Yellow Vest protests in France and the mass civil protests in Hong Kong obtained a prolonged character; but it is quite possible that even more prolonged actions may take place as well.

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Thus, the coming decades of the twenty-first century promise to be quite dynamic, full of changes, dramatic collisions, the search for new patterns at the regional and World System levels, changes in the balance of the world powers. And revolutions and other revolutionary events will play a significant role in all these processes, but their character also promises to change.

FUNDING

This research has been supported by the Russian Science Foundation (Project No 23-18-00535).

NOTES

* This article is a revised chapter Grinin L. E. 'Revolutions of the 21st Century as a Factor in the World System Reconfiguration' from Goldstone, J. A., Grinin, L., Korotayev, A. (eds.), *Handbook of Revolutions in the 21st century: The New Waves of Revolutions, and the Causes and Effects of Disruptive Political Change* (pp. 973–996). Springer.

¹ Theda Skocpol (1979) also argued that the main cause of major social revolutions was the efforts of states to 'catch up' with rival states that became more economically advanced (*e.g.*, France *vs.* England in the eighteenth century, Russia vs. Germany and China *vs.* Japan in the twentieth century).

- ² Why does the recent political component catch-up take place in the Arab countries? From the point of view of globalization processes one can hardly ignore the fact that the gap between the level of economic, technological, and educational development, on the one hand, and mentality, religious influence on everyday life, law, family/gender relationships etc., on the other, appears to be the greatest there among all the civilizations and cultural zones. It is here that women have the least rights in comparison with men, but at the same time, the level of education, culture and perception of the world among women is clearly not consistent with their situation. The influence of religion on all aspects of life, including law and finance, is much higher here than elsewhere while religious tolerance is virtually nonexistent in many countries. The Arab countries will be unable to ignore these problems for too long, especially since the high level of migration (including migration to European states) together with increasing openness to television and Internet broadcasts undermine or directly break open a previously closed ideology (for details see Grinin, Issaev, and Korotayev 2016; Grinin 2019).
- ³ At the junctions are also the societies of Transcaucasia and Central Asia, Western China (Tibet and Xiangjiang), West Africa (at the junction of Islamic and Tropical Africa [Grinin 2019]), some regions of South America. These are rather unstable regions where some symptoms of crisis are already manifesting or they are likely (but this does not mean that they will necessarily happen).
- ⁴ We are not talking about the Middle East, where unexpectedly sharp tectonic processes began even in the Gulf countries (a quarrel with Qatar) and inside Saudi Arabia as a result of the monarch's change and the emergence of a young ambitious crown prince on the foreshore.
- ⁵ In fact, the talks about an inevitable decline of America began already in the 1970s and continued in the 1980s and 1990s (see, *e.g.*, Vogel 1979; Kennedy 1987; Thompson 1988; Attali 1991; Colson and Eckerd 1991; Arrighi 1994; Frank 1998).
- ⁶ The move to a new state of the world order requires wisdom and compromise from all, especially the United States. However, wisdom has always been a scarce quality among political elites. And during the reign of President Trump it became obvious how much it is scarce in the US (Grinin and Korotayev 2020).
- ⁷ About the connection between world order and revolutions/counter-revolutions see (Armstrong 1993; Bisley 2004). About the systemic role of the international factor in the revolutionary process and in revolutionary waves, including the Arab Spring see Lawson (2015).
- ⁸ This will also imply the formation of the sixth technological paradigm (Grinin and Grinin 2014, 2015c 2016).
- ⁹ At the same time one may expect growing development of many African states and probably some Asia-Pacific region countries.
- ¹⁰ Some researchers point to the peculiar instability of the intermediate regimes that are between a consolidated democracy and consistent authoritarianism see Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022b; see also Esty *et al.* 1998; Goldstone *et al.* 2003, 2010.
- ¹¹ Perhaps, one should consider as a peculiar case of such analogues the movement for the impeachment of the South Korean President Park Geun-hye who was later sentenced to imprisonment. It is worth pointing out the new type of electoral revolutions, which happened without preceding protests and revolutionary actions (*e.g.*, in Tunisia and Ukraine in 2019).
- ¹² In general, such separation proceeds far from easily. National-liberation revolutions are connected with struggles for the independence of territories or colonies which previously had weak autonomy and little opportunity for self-expression and were often territorially separated from the colonial metropolis. National revolutions are more often associated with the struggle for broad rights or independence within geographically unified states, and the rebellious territories often already possess some autonomy and representation. The events of 2019 in Hong Kong probably should be characterized as a national movement or even national revolution.
- ¹³ This means that a movement demands political change, but these demands have limited character not touching the basis of the political regime. However, protest may be strong and long. An example is the Yellow Vests movement in France. The BLM protests in the USA in 2020 are another good

- example. About such movements see Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022a and Grinin and Grinin 2022a.
- ¹⁴ A period when a country becomes in significant measure decentralized for a long time so the importance of the central power (if it exists) considerably diminishes, so that the country splits into several territories, states or polities, none of which has the power to become a winner and unite the country (for details see Grinin and Grinin 2022a).
- ¹⁵ Besides, as has been pointed out in Goldstone, Grinin, Korotayev 2022b, revolutions especially violent ones are more likely to hamper than promote democracy and economic growth (Eckstein 1982, 1986; Gurr 1988; Zimmermann 1990; Chirot 1991; Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Goldstone 2001; Kurzman 2008).
- ¹⁶ At that, the weaker is the role of revolutionary process in paving the way for new levels and models (with simultaneously preserved or increased role of revolutions in the world-system reconfiguration), the more vivid will become revolutionary movements without revolutions within the revolutionary process.
- ¹⁷ That was the role of revolutionary waves in previous epochs, in particular after the First and Second world wars and also in the late twentieth centuries when they helped to destroy the Communist camp and bipolar world order. It is also important that historical analogies suggest that revolutionary waves can not only result from large-scale changes in the World System but also give stimuli to large-scale changes in it (*e.g.*, after the 1848 revolutions one could observe a strong acceleration of the capitalist development and emergence of modern political systems in Europe, which strongly affected the World System periphery as well; see Grinin 2022a).
- ¹⁸ It is worth emphasizing that the political crisis of recent years in the US gained peculiar features due to the archaism of the American political system, which has not changed enough for over two and a half centuries after its creation (see, *e.g.*, Freidman 2011; see also Grinin and Korotayev 2020), leading to the fact that the characteristics of American democracy have deteriorated. Indeed, the Polity5 Project already ranks it as factional.

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