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## THE CURRENT WAVE OF REVOLUTIONS IN THE WORLD-SYSTEM AND ITS ZONES\*

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*The twenty-first century has turned out to be very turbulent and restless in various respects. In the present article we consider the aspect of revolutionary activity. We observe already the third revolutionary wave within two decades. In the present article we consider the global wave of revolutionary events that started in 2018 and continue up to now. And we pay special attention to the revolutionary events of 2018–2022 in the Afrasian instability macrozone, including the MENA region. The impact of new events on the adjacent world-system zones and the World System in general is studied in connection with the previous wave and in comparison with its impact. It is shown that the recent events in the MENA region continue the World System reconfiguration process within the framework of transformation of the world order. We point out several aspects of the impact of these revolutionary events on the World System and its parts. First, they weaken the World System core; in particular, the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan heavily influences the positions of the USA and its allies. Secondly, the Middle East is increasingly left on its own due to the planned and forced withdrawal of the United States and due to the search for new vectors in foreign policy. And the revolutionary events contribute to this. Thirdly, the radical Islamist influence continues to be very noticeable, both in connection with the Taliban's victory and with further penetration of remaining revolutionary terrorists of the Islamic State to the Sahel countries and further to other African countries. In fact, one may say that in the South, the Afrasian macrozone of instability borders on a peculiar zone of instability, which can be called African. The latter is expanding together with intensification of radicalism and may significantly expand in the future at the expense of African countries that have not yet been affected by it. Fourthly, the growing danger of Islamist revolutionary-terrorist radicalism poses a problem for statehood in the countries of Tropical Africa (which they start to resolve in some places), and also requires more active and extensive assistance on the part of the international community.*

**Keywords:** *World System, MENA region, macrozone of instability, reconfiguration of the World System, revolution.*

## **Introduction**

In our analysis of the topic, we proceed from the assumption that revolutionary process never occurs in isolation. It is always a part of a broader turbulent process, in which it sometimes occupies a central and sometimes a peripheral place. In addition, the preceding revolutionary events can continue along with a new wave of revolutionary processes (as we will see below), thus merging with new ones and influencing them. At the same time, the revolutionary process, especially revolutionary waves, usually require serious World-System triggers (*e.g.*, an economic crisis or food prices increase, or a sharp weakening of a strong power, *etc.*), which are an intrinsic part of destabilization processes. Thus, on the one hand, the revolutionary process influences the World-System processes, but on the other hand, it may be a result and part of the World-System processes. That is why one should search for peculiarities of revolutionary processes of certain periods not only in the societies' historical and cultural characteristics, but also in the general features of certain World-System situations and mainstream processes.

We can identify a number of large zones of instability within the modern World System. Four of them make up the Afrasian macrozone of instability (for details, see Korotayev *et al.* 2015, 2016; Korotayev, Grinin *et al.* 2022). In particular, this macrozone comprises the Middle East (with Transcaucasia), North Africa, the Central Asian zone (including Pakistan), and the Macrosahel.

## **On the Waves of Revolutionary Events of the Twenty-First Century and Revolutionary Process in the Afrasian Macrozone of Instability**

We have formulated a new approach to identifying waves of revolutions and used it to identify three waves of revolutionary events in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> The first wave is the 'color' revolutions of 2000–2009. The second wave is formed by the Arab Spring and its global aftermath, in 2010/2011–2013. The third, unfinished, wave has been unfolding from 2018 until the present.

All waves originate from very powerful world-system events. In view of this, it seems appropriate to note that the first wave unfolded against a positive economic and political background, the second did against a negative economic one, and the third unfolded against a negative economic and foreign policy background. All three waves are associated with more or less strong external impact. One may distinguish three main aspects of this impact. The first one covers the attempts at democratization via various structures controlled by Western countries. This was especially evident during the first wave, but one can trace it also in the second and third waves. Second is the geopolitical struggle, in which both Western and Middle Eastern countries participated (the effected countries are Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Mali<sup>2</sup>). This manifested mainly during the second wave. Third is the export of the Islamist terrorist revolution from the regions of Syria and Iraq (primarily to the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, but also to a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa, like Afghanistan and Libya). This was observed during the second wave and continues in the third.

During the five-year interval between the active phase of the second wave and the beginning of the third wave (2013–2017), there was also observed sufficient revolutionary activity in the world but without obvious waves. However, here it is worth noting that the second wave was still in process in the Sahel zone and some countries of the Middle East at that time. And there emerged a line of Islamist revolutions and uprisings of 2013–2016 (ISIS, activation of Boko Haram in Nigeria, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara [ISGS], the uprising of radical Islamists AQAP in Yemen, and al-Qaeda affiliated Islamists *Ansar ul Islam* in Burkina Faso, Islamic State West Africa Province in the Chad Lake Basin, *etc.*),<sup>3</sup> see Shishkina *et al.* 2022; Fahmy *et al.* 2022; Grinin 2020d; 2020f).

Let us dwell on the indicated waves of revolutions. The first wave began in the last year of the twentieth century – in 2000 – with the revolution of 2000–2001 in the Philippines and the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia/Yugoslavia (Khodunov 2022a). The wave comprises revolutions and revolutionary events in Georgia (Khodunov 2022b), the Maldives (Kaigorodova 2021) and Ukraine (Shevsky 2022), Lebanon (Kaigorodova 2020), Kyrgyzstan (Ivanov 2022), Myanmar, Iran, and Moldova (Tkachuk *et al.* 2022). Sometimes researchers add the events in Africa to this list, and for our topic it is important to take into account the revolutionary events in sub-Saharan Africa in the 2000s, in particular, in Senegal in 2000, Madagascar in 2001–2002, Togo in 2005 and Guinea in 2007–2010 *etc.* (see Goldstone *et al.* 2022a, b; Grinin and Korotayev 2022a; Ust-yuzhanin *et al.* 2021). It is important that in this period the general rise of the global economy went along with the rise of democratization in the world (the so-called third wave of democratization – see, *e.g.*, Huntington 1993). The main features of the wave were the following: 1) the revolutions did not coincide or overlap (as in the previous and next waves) but generally followed one another sequentially with some delay, more like a relay race, in a kind of chain, with only one event per year, or two; 2) at the same time, there is a clear connection between these revolutions as regards a) the world-systemic reasons (see above); b) external forces and organizations that provided comprehensive guidance, training and assistance to the revolutionaries; c) their goals; and d) their methods of revolutionary action; 3) thanks to excellent organization, weak state resistance and Western support, these revolutions have mostly won.

The second wave is the Arab Spring and its aftermath (2010/2011–2013 [Grinin and Korotayev 2022a, 2022b; Grinin *et al.* 2019; Beck 2014]). In contrast to the previous wave, in the late 2000s the world economy was in crisis. There occurred an unprecedented increase in food prices (agflation), which played a particular role as a trigger for revolutionary events in the Middle East. For our topic, it is especially important that the center of revolutionary activity was in the Middle East and North Africa, but at the same time, the revolutionary wave swept many countries outside this region. In addition to revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa, the wave involved a number of revolutionary events in other parts of the world, including revolutionary movements without revolutions in the advanced Western countries (Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, *etc.*).

The main features of this wave were: (1) a rapid spread of revolutions from country to country; (2) strong cultural and linguistic unity of the central region of the wave and

a peculiar role of the religious and ethno-confessional factor; and (3) a special role of the educated youth.

An important event in the Middle East was the emergence of the Islamic State in the northern regions of Syria and Iraq, whose influence began to spread far beyond the borders of this region. As a result of the defeat of the ISIS, revolutionary terrorists migrated to African countries, where they found fertile ground among the local Islamic population, especially young people. This brought revolutionary-terrorist destabilization to a number of regions of the Sahel and East Africa (see Grinin 2020f). As already mentioned, the second wave actually merged with the third one in these regions. At the moment, a global revolutionary-terrorist network of radicals who swore allegiance to the ISIS has actually been created.

The third wave (from 2018 till the present) includes revolutions, revolutionary episodes and revolutionary movements without revolutions in Armenia (2018, 2020), Sudan (2018–2019), Bolivia (2019 and 2020), Algeria (2019), Hong Kong (2019–2020), Chile (2019), Kyrgyzstan (2020), Georgia (2020), Iraq (2019), Lebanon (2019), Iran (2019), India (Jammu and Kashmir 2019), Nepal (2020), the USA (2021 storming of the United States Capitol), France (Yellow Vests movement in 2018–2020), Belarus (2020–2021), Myanmar (2021), Somalia (2020–2021), Ethiopia (2020–2021, in Tigray region), Mali (2020–2021), Haiti (2021), Colombia (2021), Palestine (2021), Chad (2021), Kazakhstan (2022) and Canada (2022).<sup>4</sup> Besides, it is necessary to recall events in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Niger (quasi-revolutionary episode). Revolutionary events, whose essence has yet to be comprehended, occur in some other places, for example, in Corsica.

As we can see, the revolutionary events in the Afroasian macrozone of instability, in general, and the MENA region, in particular, include a significant part of the third wave events. These are: revolutions in Sudan, Algeria, Mali, Somalia, Ethiopia (the Tigray region, failed), Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia; revolutionary movements without revolution in Lebanon and Iraq; revolutionary episodes in Iran, Palestine, Chad, and Kazakhstan; as well as protests in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and a quasi-revolutionary episode in Niger.<sup>5</sup>

At the world-system scale, this wave is associated with a new deterioration in the global economy, along with greater concentration of wealth and greater inequality, which in many cases led to lower living standards, higher prices and other phenomena that link this wave to the previous one. In 2020, the COVID pandemic broke out and its consequences significantly worsened the economic and social situation – in particular, the pandemic played certain role in the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Chad, Jammu and Kashmir, Nepal, Bolivia, Canada, revolution analogue in Tunisia, riot in Sri Lanka (2022), protests in Pakistan and Bangladesh against fuel prices skyrocketing (2022) and others).

In 2021–2022, a new threat emerged – the rising food prices combined with its shortage. It was already outlined as a result of the pandemic, but became especially severe because of the sharp rise in the price of energy and fuel (in particular, gas and oil). The increase in prices for mineral fertilizers and restrictions on their export, as well as on the export of grain, natural disasters in some countries, in particular in China (failure

of winter grain crops), Morocco and some European countries (drought) as well as adverse weather conditions in some other countries threaten to deteriorate food security in a number of countries in Asia and Africa. In addition, military actions in Ukraine and an avalanche of sanctions against Russia threaten the global grain and food market. Thus, it would be quite logical to assume that the threat of a new agflation is quite real. And this can become a trigger for revolutionary events in a number of countries, as happened during the Arab Spring.

The current wave is characterized by the following features: (1) a wide range of revolutionary events; (2) a variety of reasons for revolutions on a common basis, associated with deterioration not only in the economic, but also in foreign policy and international terms; and (3) respective growth of such forms of revolutionary events as revolutionary movements without revolutions.

Thus, a new group of revolutionary events in the Afroasian macrozone of instability, in general, and the MENA region, in particular, is a part of the third revolutionary wave of the twenty-first century in the World System, which began in 2018 and continues up to the present. We suppose that it will continue because of the aggravating economic tensions, growing inflation and shortage of food production (including shortage of grain supply from Russia and Ukraine to the MENA region).

Accordingly, the above-mentioned main features of the third wave are manifested to varying degrees in the events in the Middle East, North Africa and the Macrosahel.

In this regard, we can distinguish two clear lines of revolutionary process in recent years. The first one – secularist, which is generally in tune with the global line: discontent with governments, anti-clerical actions, a common aspiration for change, a demand for democratization and social policy, *etc.*; at the same time, far from always there is a clear desire to overthrow regimes (the example of Lebanon is typical here). The second line is Islamist radical and terrorist, especially in African countries, where terrorist activity turns into a revolutionary guerrilla struggle.

The Islamist line, of course, characterizes the peculiar causes of some revolutions in the Afrasian macrozone in recent years in comparison with the general causes of the third wave of revolutions. In addition, among the peculiar reasons for the revolutionary events in the Afrasian macrozone one may point out the unresolved problems that caused the Arab Spring (this applies to Egypt, Iraq, and to a certain extent to Lebanon and Palestine), the revolutionary traps in which some countries fall (*e.g.*, Kyrgyzstan, or Mali), the ongoing process of increasing maturity of statehood (examples are Sudan, Algeria) or weakness of state and failure of state functions (Mali), as well as changes in the geopolitical situation, which we will discuss in the third section. One should point out that the countries of the Arab Spring have not calmed down to the end and revolutionary epochs (as in Egypt) or vestiges (as in Tunisia) continue there, not to mention Libya and Syria.

### **About Revolution and Reconfiguration of the World System**

Since 2009, we have been studying changes in the World System in connection with the forthcoming Arab Spring and have come to a conclusion that in the following decades the international system will start to transform faster and to a more considerable degree. In other words, we are entering a period of searching for new structural and systemic

changes within the World System. We have also come to the conclusion that the turbulent events of the Arab Spring can be considered as the starting point of the global re-configuration of the World System, which will eventually lead to its dramatic transformations. The main reason for this reconfiguration, as we have shown, is associated with a noticeable lag between the political component of globalization and its economic component. However, this will be a rather long and turbulent period (Grinin and Korotayev 2010: 173; see also Grinin 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Grinin and Korotayev 2011, 2012a, b, 2016; Grinin *et al.* 2017). We also argue that some revolutionary waves have additional important world-system reasons for their emergence (Grinin 2022). In our opinion, the Arab Spring wave is of this kind (Grinin 2012a, 2022; see also Beck 2014). At the same time, we rely on our own theory stating that the political component of the World System lags behind its economic component and from time to time starts to catch it up. When such a catch-up occurs, it often turns out to be complicated and turbulent. Revolutions in this case appear a part of a broad and conflicting process of the world-system political component catching-up with its economic component (Grinin 2022). Therefore, we consider the Arab Spring as a period of drastic upheavals (still far from being over) that launched the World-System reconfiguration process. It also became a harbinger of the coming serious structural transformations of the world (*Ibid.*; see also Grinin 2016; Grinin *et al.* 2019).

We also pointed out that the future revolutionary process might be associated with general processes of destabilization in various parts of the World System, and in particular, in the Afrasian instability macrozone, since revolutionary process never occurs in isolation and it is always a more or less important part of a wider turbulent process.

Thus, political relations often do not keep up with economic growth. Meanwhile, rapid economic development requires a certain pulling of the political system to an appropriate level. Otherwise, internal tensions and contradictions in society increase. And the stronger they are perceived, the greater is the possibility of revolutionary crises. However, the change of political and social institutions in many societies is hampered by their rigidity, as well as by the interests of the elite. Such a situation of a strong gap between the level of technological and economic development, on the one hand, and the backwardness of political system, on the other, can be found in many societies during the period of growing revolutionary crisis. Such a lag between two vectors leads to the emergence of various disproportions that contribute to the strengthening of opposition, the growth of protests and revolutionary ideologies. As the processes of globalization develop, such a gap between economic development (globalization) and institutional changes at the level of international relations and the world order (political globalization) becomes generally obvious within the World System. And in our opinion, this is becoming a more and more important cause of internal crisis in the World System and significant changes in it.

By the 2010s, the economic and financial globalization had considerably advanced in its development in comparison with international law and political globalization. In other words, within the framework of globalization, the political process lagged noticeably behind the economic one. But the lag in the development of one component from another cannot last endlessly, and when the gap becomes too large, a period of catching

up of the political component begins. In this situation, the development of economy should have slowed down, which happened as a result of the 2008 crisis. And it is important to understand that the lag between social and political components and the economic one was one of the most important causes of this (as well as subsequent) crisis (Grinin *et al.* 2011). This did not become clear immediately, however, along with other reasons (in particular, due to the dynamics of long Kondratieff cycles (see, *e.g.*, Grinin and Grinin 2014; Grinin *et al.* 2017)) this afforded ground for us to making predictions that in the following 15–20 years the world economy would develop more slowly than in previous years (Grinin and Korotayev 2010: 172–174; see also Grinin 2009, 2010, 2012b; Grinin and Korotayev 2012b, 2015; Grinin, Issaev, and Korotayev 2016; Grinin, Korotayev, and Tausch 2016). In the current (pandemic) period we have even witnessed a negative growth (Efimovich 2020).

While economic development will slow down, globalization will freeze or go backwards, the political transformation of the World System will intensify. Under the conditions of the World System reconfiguration, ‘the breaks’ occur in its most unstable and weak places, and, as a rule, these regions are a place of confrontation between various interests and vectors of power.<sup>6</sup> From this we may conclude that the processes of reconfiguration in the Afrasian instability macrozone can hardly cease.

As already mentioned, we assume that the events of the Arab Spring from late 2010 launched the World System reconfiguration. The subsequent events in the Middle East, North Africa, Ukraine, and the Far East (Grinin 2014) more and more indicate that the reconfiguration of the World System has started and is proceeding quite actively.

For our study, it is extremely important that while the World System reconfiguration started with the events of the Arab Spring in 2010–2011 and the central events of this revolutionary wave took place in the Middle East and North Africa, the situation with the third revolutionary wave would significantly differ.

The fact is that starting from 2016, the World System reconfiguration process began to shift to its center.<sup>7</sup> It has largely affected the United States and Europe, where the main events of the reconfiguration process seem to take place at present.<sup>8</sup> And inevitably this will significantly and in different ways impact the destiny of the societies of the Afrasian macrozone of instability, in general, and the MENA region, in particular.

As a result, since 2018, the main revolutionary events of the third revolutionary wave took place in different places of the World System; and the confrontations in the USA in 2020 – early 2021 became especially significant in this context. Thus, the events in the MENA region can no longer be considered as leading in the third revolutionary wave. They continue the world-system reconfiguration but already as a part of the global revolutionary process.

Pulling up the political component to the economic one actually means a transition to a new world order. But such a transition will take quite a long time. And it is important to understand that its initial phase implies weakening, loosening and/or destruction of the old order (while the formation of a new order is the following phase). Consequently, with regard to the near future, one may speak about a very unstable and turbulent period full of conflicts and complicated, as already mentioned, by depressive economic development. Any political change that occurs at a national or regional scale,

even any noticeable socio-political action that leads to destabilization or its threat, especially a revolution, in principle leads to an increase in crisis phenomena in the world. Unfortunately, we have also witnessed wars. The studies show that the possibility of revolutions and their victory largely depends on the existence of favorable international context (see, *e.g.*, Goldfrank 1979; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989; Wickham-Crowley 1992). We believe that the World System reconfiguration will rather be favorable than negative for future revolutions.

### **On the Impact of Revolutionary Events in the Afrasian Macrozone of Instability on the World System**

Revolutions or other manifestations of instability affect, in one way or another, the neighbors and sometimes also countries that are far from the zone of events. Thus, the ongoing civil war in Syria created the migrant crisis in Europe in 2015–2016. In 2021, the wave of refugees from Afghanistan and other places of the MENA region turned out to be a geopolitical weapon in Belarus hands and created a problem in relations between Belarus (which also experienced a failed revolution in 2020–2021) and Europe. As is well-known, migrants from these and other countries tried to pass through Belarus to Poland, Lithuania and further on to other EU countries. Of course, the United States and also a number of other countries experience the influx of refugees from Afghanistan. Due to the Islamist terrorism, the problem of refugees is relevant and painful in the Sahel and beyond it, in other African regions (see Grinin 2020a, b, c, d, f). In particular, twenty million people live in the zone of terrorist attacks in the Sahel countries, which creates serious humanitarian problems and prerequisites for destabilization. According to the UN Secretariat, from January to November 2019, 488 terrorist attacks were carried out in Burkina Faso compared to 150 in 2018, in Niger – 118 against 69. In 2019, 1,507 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Mali, 918 in Burkina Faso, and 404 in Niger. The number of displaced people reaches 1 million (UN 2019: 2/26; Korendyasov 2020). All this makes these countries a zone of attention and geopolitical interests of large countries, including China, the USA, Russia, France, the EU and others. But the influence of this radicalism extends far beyond the Macrosahel zone. Thus, at the beginning of 2021, hundreds of thousands of refugees left Cabo Delgado, a province in northeastern Mozambique, as a result of the radicals' attack on the city of Palma, in particular tens of thousands fled to neighboring Tanzania (Fokina 2021; Volkov 2021). Terrorists carried out mass executions in the city.

After 2018, the following revolutions can be considered as the major ones (the most important events): the revolutions in Sudan, Algeria, Mali, Kyrgyzstan, and especially the victory of the Taliban. But, as has already been mentioned above, each revolutionary event contributes to loosening of the world order, and in general, the events of recent years in the Afrasian macrozone of instability continue the process of the World System reconfiguration as a part of the transformation of the world order. We would like to dwell on several aspects of the impact of these revolutionary events on the World System and its parts.

First, we should speak about geopolitical consequences which weaken the World System core. In particular, the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan produced a strong effect



on the positions of the USA and its allies in terms of declining confidence in the USA, who had again betrayed the allies in the country. After the late 1970s, Afghanistan entered a long period of revolutions, civil wars, interventions, an actual decentralization of the country, and other disasters. It was not just a revolutionary epoch, but a significantly more difficult epoch of unrest and revolutions full of disasters and devastation, which, unfortunately, is still going on. Having started with a social-type revolution (with initial claims of a socialist type), it then turned into a religious one. With respect to the concepts of a revolutionary era and an era of unrest and revolutions, it is important to keep in mind that revolutionary events that occur in their course must be characterized as related, while the revolutionary events that happened in other periods – as independent. In this sense, the victory of the Taliban is not an organic part of the third revolutionary wave (and of any other wave). But it gave the third wave and the events in the Afrasian macrozone a very significant world-systemic resonance.

The defeat, a shameful one at that, of the United States in Afghanistan along with the collapse like a house of cards, of the regime that they had been establishing for 20 years, (a) weakened the influence of the United States in the Greater Middle East and in the whole world; (b) demonstrated that in recent decades the United States could easily betray its allies that relied on them (and there are millions of such loyal people in Afghanistan); (c) strengthened the position of Islamic fundamentalists not only in Afghanistan, but throughout the Islamic world. It also exacerbates concerns of neighboring countries (including Russia) that all sorts of uncontrolled people and cargoes as well as perilous impact would now penetrate through the Afghan border. In addition, the geopolitical struggle between major powers, including China, for influence in Afghanistan, is intensifying. Finally, the defeat in Afghanistan has deepened the rift in American society (and even in the Democratic Party) and the general crisis there, which will undoubtedly resonate in the world in a variety of ways. Perhaps, the defeat in Afghanistan may for some time restrain the aggressive aspirations that incite the American hawks to choose the course of aggravation of relations with Russia and in its turn gave the latter hope that the USA would not help Ukraine as actively as the USA does now. As to Afghanistan, on the one hand, the country will suffer a cultural and legal setback (which is already observed) with respect to the role and position of women, secular education, etc. But on the other hand, perhaps the country will find some peace, as far as it is actually possible under this regime.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the Taliban's victory intensified rivalry among radical Islamist forces, in particular between the remaining members of the ISIS, representing extreme radicals, and the Taliban, as moderate radicals. The clash between the two trends of extreme radicalism (Al-Qaeda and ISIS) has been going on in African countries since 2013 and especially intensified in 2014–2018.

Secondly, the Middle East is gradually left on its own due to the planned and forced withdrawal of the United States from there (and the above-mentioned defeat in Afghanistan) and weakening of American support for Israel, the search for new directions in foreign policy (Grinin, Issaev, and Korotayev 2016; Grinin, Korotayev, and Tausch 2016: Conclusion). And revolutionary events contribute to this. All this leads to growing independence of the Middle Eastern countries from the United States.<sup>10</sup> In general, over the

past few years, the influence of global and regional geopolitics on destabilization in the Middle East has greatly increased, and the situation of instability has become permanent. The vacuum of external influence that emerged as a result of the US withdrawal from the Middle East is being filled by other players: Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Let us repeat that the vacuum also affected the revolutionary process, and, in turn, contributes to the weakening of the US position. We assume that this factor of destabilization will preserve its unceasing impact for a long time.

Thirdly, the radical Islamist influence continues to be very noticeable, both in connection with the Taliban's victory and with further expansion of the remaining revolutionary terrorists of the Islamic State into the Sahel countries and further to other African countries. Any rise of Islamism may produce an impact on regions in India and China where Muslims are a minority and feel themselves disadvantaged. There are a huge number of Muslims living in India, while there are such states as Jammu and Kashmir which border Pakistan and where Muslims make an absolute majority. This creates centers of instability. In China, a large number of Muslims live in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, where Western countries have long dreamed of making a revolution. And this may happen if China ever loosens the reins (for details see Grinin 2020f).

But the most important, both in terms of scale and duration, is the impact of radical Islamism on Africa south of the Sahel.

The phenomenon of Islamic renaissance together with a wide spread of Islamism actually creates an important basis for destabilization, since it generates radicalism as its extreme wing. In the Sahel and beyond, Islamism is mostly undeveloped. As a result, these societies, on the one hand, turned out to be susceptible to radicalism and terrorism, since radicals from the countries of the Middle East and North Africa quite easily recruit supporters and volunteers here, and on the other hand, these countries (due to the lack of experience, insufficient level of development of the state apparatus, a rapidly growing population, including urban, so cold youth bulges and other reasons) appeared in many respects helpless against terrorists. As a result, some of them have become bases for the spread of terror. Therefore, a number of countries, such as Mali and Niger, are in need of external assistance against terrorism. Radicals are active in many countries outside the Sahel. So, in 2016, a new terrorist organization was created (on the basis of the Somali Al-Shabaab) with a very characteristic name 'Islamic State of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda' (ISISSKTU), known as 'Jahba East Africa'. In addition to these East African countries, radicals operate in Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries. Thus, outside the Sahel, as a result of the activities of the radicals, an African zone of instability is being created, which tends to merge with the Afrasian one. The former can and probably will expand significantly. The terrorist revolutionism with Islamic characteristics is rapidly spreading. Let us point out a distinctive fact. As mentioned above, after the capture and burning of the city of Palma in Mozambique, tens of thousands of Mozambicans fled to Tanzania. However, the Prime Minister of Mozambique, Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, urged caution in dealing with refugees, since they may be trying to attract recruits for the ISIS (Fokina 2021). That is, radicalism is spreading via refugees.

Thus, a new wave of revolutionary events does not simply continue the process of the world-system reconfiguration. While earlier we pointed out that this break associated with the Arab Spring happened in the MENA region, now Tropical Africa, and not only the Sahel, but also countries to its south gradually join it. At the same time, while the Middle East catches up to the level of developed countries (the first line of revolutionary directions), then in Tropical Africa, where the level of development is much lower, there are processes similar to the Reformation in Europe in the 16–17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Grinin 2019; Grinin, Korotayev 2019; Grinin *et al.* 2019), or at least to the Islamic revival of 50 years ago (see about this in Huntington 1996). But one way or another, revolutionary events bring many countries (especially from the hinterland) out of isolation.

Let us also note that the growing danger of Islamist revolutionary-terrorist radicalism poses the problem (which they start to resolve in some places) of strengthening statehood in the countries of Tropical Africa, and also requires more active and extensive assistance from developed countries. The world needs African minerals, but the terrorist threat hinders their mining (similar to Afghanistan). Thus, the attack on the city of Palma in Mozambique had apparently the main goal of preventing the construction of an LNG plant and development of the Mozambique LNG project, on which the government of the country bet big. In 2011, the gas deposits were discovered on the shelf and in the basin of the Rovuma and Mozambique rivers which attracted leading mining and service companies to Mozambique, including Total, ExxonMobile, Mitsui, Oil India and others (Volkov 2021).

Concluding the article, let us say that in one way or another, Tropical Africa (especially the part with Islamic population) will become a very restless territory for a long time. Moreover, we predict that this zone of instability in Africa will expand, capturing more and more countries. One may expect Africa to become the most vibrant zone of the World System. This is due to the fact that as society advances and transitions to more mature relations, there appear ideology, social, national and political forces and conditions for certain processes, which can simultaneously have a destabilization effect. This refers to the following factors: the aspiration for a nation state, for democracy and social justice, the elites' desire to get some benefits and power, the struggle for resources and privileges, the strengthening contradictions between regions of a country, and many others. All this can lead to internal confrontation and, as a result, to possible destabilization. Modernization continues in the Sahel countries, in a number of countries in the Near and Middle East, as well as in the countries bordering the Afrasian instability macrozone. As a result, these societies form an increasingly complex conglomerate of modern and archaic features in all spheres of production and life. The archaic features will, of course, disappear, but this will take a long time. And with rapid modernization, a tough conflict arises between the advanced and the archaic, which in itself is a source of instability. At the same time, this will accelerate the activities to strengthen statehood, order and necessary legislation in African countries, so the attention to this continent will increase.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Within our approach we define the following criteria: (1) a real connection between events within the framework of the World System by common factors; (2) the number of revolutions should not

be less than 4–5; (3) the time interval between revolutionary events, which should be no more than ten years between the beginning of the first and the beginning of the last event; and (4) one chronological period can experience only one wave (Goldstone et al. 2022a, b; Grinin and Grinin 2020, 2021, 2022; Grinin and Korotayev 2021; Grinin et al. 2022).

<sup>2</sup> About the revolutionary events in these countries see, e.g., Issaev, Khokhlova, and Korotayev (2022), Akhmedov (2022), Barmin (2022), Korotayev, Grinin, and Malkov (2021); Korotayev, Liokumovich, Khokhlova (2021), Grinin, Issaev, and Korotayev (2016); Grinin, Korotayev, and Tausch (2016), Grinin (2020a, b, d).

<sup>3</sup> These organizations are forbidden in the Russian Federation (*Editor's Note*).

<sup>4</sup> About revolutionary events of this wave see also Goldstone et al. (2022a, b), Grinin and Korotayev (2022a); Grinin and Grinin (2020), Ustyuzhanin et al. (2021), Grinin (2020a, b, d), Klochkov (2021), Gallyamova (2021), Stepanischeva (2021), Guliev (2021), Pavlova (2021), Guseinov (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Here we must add the ongoing unrest in Libya and civil wars in Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

<sup>6</sup> We can see this by the Ukrainian example. This country (as it was several times in its history) today has become a stumbling block between Russia and the West. The Russian-Ukrainian war will influence greatly the World System reconfiguration.

<sup>7</sup> We have witnessed unexpected turns in the UK, which is leaving the European Union, in Spain, for example, in connection with the events in Catalonia, in France, which was shaken by the “Yellow Vests” protests, in the USA, from the coming to power of Donald Trump and to the ongoing unrest of the black population and white sympathizers. It is worth mentioning also the protests in Canada and Corsica in 2022. All of these and other phenomena are elements of this reconfiguration. Finally, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic even became a completely global event which has been contributing to the destruction of the old world order. And the current temporary denial of the basic rights of citizens, the closure of borders, the uncontrolled use of artificial intelligence, etc., coupled with economic difficulties, will give impetus to significant changes in the future. As a result, the process of World System reconfiguration will intensify.

<sup>8</sup> Based on the foregoing, two interrelated systems of global development vectors can be distinguished: weakening of the World System core, that is, of the United States and the West, and simultaneous strengthening of the positions of a number of peripheral countries, and in general, strengthening of developing countries in the world economy and politics. These two opposite vectors, however, together make up a single process which we call the Great Convergence (Grinin and Korotayev 2014, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> At least the Taliban have already banned the cultivation of opium poppy throughout Afghanistan.

<sup>10</sup> Yet, a direct or indirect influence of the United States on the revolutionary events, say, in Sudan cannot be entirely excluded. The Americans really disliked al-Bashar, the former president of Sudan, and imposed sanctions against his regime for supporting terrorists, and constantly incited separatists in South Sudan and Darfur against the central government.

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