
DESTABILIZATION AND WORLD ORDER: SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES

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Destabilization is the most important and inevitable part of socio-political and other processes and trends throughout human history. Cycles of order and disorder, destabilization and stabilization, destruction and creation occur at all levels of society and the World System, in the most diverse forms and for the most diverse reasons. Finally, development never proceeds smoothly and is constantly accompanied by various, often very severe, shocks and cataclysms. The study of the types, forms and causes of destabilization, their classification and the clarification of the terminology of their analysis is a very important task, which, unfortunately, still does not receive a relevant attention. However, the better such a classification is worked out, the deeper these processes are understood, the more obvious it will become that all these often seemingly unrelated phenomena and processes are different forms of the general process of development of society and humanity as a whole.

Can destabilization be avoided in principle? On the one hand, we can see that much has been achieved so far in terms of reducing the negative effects and mitigating the most destructive forms of destabilization. But on the other hand, we must not entertain vain hopes that we have succeeded in opening up a conflict-free way forward. The strength of the contradictions, the desire for power, the redistribution of resources, the imposition of one's own ideologies and points of view, the refusal to respect other ways of development, ways of life, etc. are so great that conflicts, unfortunately, become inevitable. And recent events in the world – the Special Military Operation, the escalation of the conflict in Palestine, etc. – have shown how fragile and even naive our hopes were that the era of wars was behind us. Thus, the study of destabilization and its forms becomes a highly topical and practical task.

In the second section of the article, the authors analyze the close connection between the various processes of destabilization and the modern process of deeper transformation of the world order. The authors show in various as-

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pects that destabilization and world order are actually closely related, since a change in the world order always leads to a change in the balance of power.

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SECTION 1. Destabilization

1. Destabilization as a Necessary Factor for Historical Development and Change of the World Order

Destabilization is an important and inevitable part of socio-political and other processes that can be traced throughout the human history. Similar to the two Hegelian 'opposing sides', destabilization and organization (the latter also including an element of stabilization) always remain in dynamic unity and struggle. Periods of the strengthening of order give way to periods of its weakening as a result of various destabilization processes. At the same time, on the one hand, destabilization is the entropy of order in society, and on the other hand, it is a tool of creative destruction (following Joseph Schumpeter [1949]). Otherwise, the regimes and social institutions would constantly stagnate. Every historian deals with a wide range of destabilizing events, some of which become major milestones in world history. For example, the barbarian invasions and great migrations of the fourth and fifth centuries CE led to the total decline of the Western Roman Empire and the formation of a number of new barbarian states on its ruins that gave rise to modern European nations. Wars have always been a destabilizing factor, but some of them (including world wars) have played a significant role in reformatting the political map, changing the regional, European or world order. Here we come to the idea that destabilization and world order are actually closely related, since a change in the world order always leads to a change in the balance of power, which in turn leads to the destabilization of the previous world order and the struggle for a new one (the latter being the highest form of destabilization), which finally leads to a period of stabilization and stability (see below).

Thus, *the cycles of order and disorder, destabilization and stabilization occur at all levels of society and the World System, in a variety of forms and for a variety of reasons.* The study of these types, forms, reasons, their classification and ordering in scientific terms is a very important task, which, unfortunately, has not yet received the attention it deserves. There are many studies on some types of destabilization – protests, terrorist activities, civil wars, military coups, *etc.* However, there are very few general studies on the common patterns of socio-political destabilization.

The deeper the generalizations, the more precisely the laws are formulated, the better such a classification is worked out, the more obvious it becomes that all these often apparently unrelated phenomena and processes are different forms of the general process of development of society and humanity as a whole. This development has never been smooth and calm, but has always been accompanied by numerous, often very serious, upheavals and cataclysms.

Can destabilization be avoided in principle? We see that by now much has been achieved in terms of reducing the negative consequences and mitigating the most de-

structive forms of destabilization. This means that progress is possible. That is why, on the one hand, it is extremely important to fight for the progress to be made in the least costly and optimal way, and for destabilizations to take place in legal forms, ‘according to the rules,’ and there have undoubtedly been successes in this regard. But, on the other hand, we cannot delude ourselves with the hope that we have managed to open up a conflict-free path forward. The power of contradictions, the desire for power, the redistribution of resources, the imposition of one's own ideologies and points of view, the refusal to respect other paths of development, lifestyles, customs, *etc.* are so great that, unfortunately, conflicts are becoming inevitable. Recent events in the world – the new Cold War, the Ukrainian conflict, the escalation of the conflict in Palestine and others – have shown how fragile and even naive our hopes were that the era of wars was behind us. Although it cannot be said that these hopes were entirely unfounded, the option of force has prevailed. And once again it is worth pointing out that the beginning of a military conflict on a scale not seen since the Second World War is directly related to the struggle to change the world order.

Destabilization (both in its forms and in its causes) can be expressed not only in socio-economic and political terms, but also in natural terms. Any large-scale change in climate, landscape, river regime, sea level rise or retreat, *etc.* inevitably leads to radical changes in lifestyle, demography and political stability. And today we witness how climate change in certain places (whatever the cause) leads to noticeable upheavals in the economy, lifestyle and politics. Only few years ago, it seemed that pandemics were a thing of the past (and they had a very significant impact on destabilization, since the population was greatly reduced [Russel 1975; Grinin L., Grinin A. 2023]). However, COVID-19 has shown that even today this is an extremely dangerous phenomenon, which becomes even more terrible when it is man-made.

It is also worth noting that in recent decades we have witnessed a unique historical experiment – the systematic and peaceful construction of a single European political organism, the European Union. Despite all the frictions, Europeans managed to avoid disintegration and destabilization even during the difficult period of the global financial and economic crisis of 2010–2013. And this is undoubtedly a great success that we cannot but admire, no matter what we think of modern European politicians. It should be noted, however, that this is mainly the merit not of the current politicians, but of their much more worthy predecessors, among whom there were truly outstanding figures. But, on the other hand, we can clearly see that the construction of the EU has reached a dead end, since pan-European interests have been replaced by globalist and green goals, as well as the interests of the Euro-bureaucracy, which, in turn, has been finally and irrevocably subjugated by the United States. If there is no European sovereignty then there is no development. Therefore, it is possible that destabilization processes will increase in the EU – either because of increased stagnation against the background of an unhealthy ethno-demographic situation, or if forces come to power that oppose European unity and seek the return of national sovereignty, or for other underlying reasons. However, destabilization processes will undoubtedly also occur in countries that have broken away from the EU, as we see today in the UK. In any case, Oswald Spengler's prediction of the decline of Europe is coming closer to reality (Spengler 1939).¹

We observe numerous and diverse processes of destabilization and destabilizing events in the modern world. In some cases, as in the United States in recent years, we witness a growing split of the nation over an ever-increasing number of fundamental issues.² After Trump's victory, this division is likely to become deeper and more dangerous. In others, societies are torn apart by ethno-political, social or religious contradictions, revolutions and civil wars, territories are the scene of endless territorial disputes or live under conditions of radical terror, *etc.* In others, the weakening of the center leads to the disintegration of large states and the destruction of previous ties and institutions and a decline in living standards. The collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia are typical examples. But destabilization processes can also manifest themselves in the degradation of the monetary and economic system; in the demographic structure, family, marriage, gender structure; in national education systems (including pre-school); in the decline of religions; in the increase of mental illnesses (which often leads to mass murders with firearms or other weapons). However, it is crucial to recognize that these seemingly different-level processes, related to completely different spheres and completely unrelated to each other, unexpectedly turn out to be different links in general processes. Many of the observations made above, particularly in relation to the United States, are manifestations of the process that we have described as the reconfiguration of the World System, which will sooner or later result in a change in the American world order (Grinin, Korotayev 2023).

Many processes of degradation leading to destabilization are connected for a very simple (but therefore all the more dangerous) reason. The fact is that behind all of them there are powerful financial, technological and political forces that largely coordinate their actions – we call them globalists. And the role of these globalists in the process of reformatting both the general situation and the world order is very great (for details see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2021a, 2021b).³

Thus, any society can be considered as a system that experiences internal and external influences. Taking into account the strength of these influences, the analysis of the balance between exogenous and endogenous factors is one of the most difficult tasks, especially given the complex direct and feedback links between them, which can both strengthen and weaken certain impulses (see Korotayev *et al.* 2017; Grinin, Korotayev 2023). This consideration is particularly important for understanding the reasons for the success or failure of major transformations. It is even more important when analyzing instability, its causes, and especially such major upheavals as revolutions. For example, the global financial and economic crisis of 2008–2010 had a huge impact on the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ (Grinin, Korotayev 2012), especially in the form of so-called agflation. On the other hand, seemingly internal events such as presidential elections (especially when they involve a superpower) become factors of global scale, capable of triggering political transformations in a wide variety of places.

Thus, *destabilization, or at least its threat, is an inevitable phase in the development of any society at a certain stage (stages)*. The question is to what extent the society is able to resist it, to what extent it is institutionalized and adaptive to various threats, using the characteristics of Samuel Huntington (1968). The analysis shows that, on the one hand, societies capable of achieving a stable order and its reproduction are able not

only to overcome such threats, but also to institutionalize mechanisms that will prevent the emergence of such situations.

On the other hand, experience shows that even successful and flexible institutions may age and become insufficiently effective. As a result, they no longer protect society from crises as they used to. The migration crisis that hit Europe in early 2015, almost splitting it and causing political turmoil in a number of countries, clearly showed that European countries have forgotten how to do what they were good at in previous eras, when they strictly protected order and their borders (see Grinin, Issaev, and Korotayev 2016). The 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections in the United States have caused a noticeable split in American society, which is also growing and widening, as well as a confrontation in the political system unprecedented since the Civil War (Grinin 2020a). And the consequences of this confrontation are not yet clear. This shows that no regime or association is exempt from destabilization. But societies and states in which the mechanisms for dealing with such challenges are not institutionalized to the necessary extent are much more susceptible to destabilizing situations and factors (that is why young African states are much more susceptible to destabilization than states with a long history, all other things being equal, *cf.* Grinin *et al.* 2024). At the same time, different factors can affect certain societies in different ways, which is related to their historical and political characteristics, and the response largely depends on the specific moment and situation. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some trends and patterns in terms of factors that can cause destabilization, which is one of the objectives of this article.

This proves the importance of not only studying such factors, but also determining their level of danger, the environment in which they can manifest themselves most unexpectedly and harshly, the levels of indicators that show an increasing risk of destabilization, *etc.*

2. On the Possible Typology of Destabilizing Events

2.1. On the existing typologies of destabilizing events

Unfortunately, typologies of destabilizing events are poorly and unsystematically developed. Among the existing ones, it is worth mentioning the typology of the *Cross National Time Series (CNTS)* database, which identifies eight types:

1. Political assassinations.
2. Political strikes.
3. Guerrilla actions.
4. Government crises.
5. Political repression.
6. Mass riots.
7. Revolutions (this also actually includes coups and attempted coups).
8. Anti-government demonstrations.

All these eight sub-categories are used to construct the overall index of socio-political destabilization. To do this, the compilers of the CNTS database have assigned a certain weight to each subcategory, as they are different types in terms of strength. The overall

performance characteristics of these types are also given (see Databanks n. d.; Banks and Wilson 2020).

This is a useful typology, but it is far from complete. One reason for this is that it actually takes into account only internal factors of destabilization, and only those factors that can be digitized.

The *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (a data processing program) examines both internal and external factors of destabilization, but only in one specific aspect, namely, exclusively armed forms of destabilization (conflicts), dividing them by type of conflicts in which armed violence is used (state-based violence; non-state violence; unilateral violence / state violence; non-state violence; unilateral violence) and by scale (UCDP n.d.).

Within the framework of *Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*, they collect real-time data on the locations, dates, participants, deaths, and types of all registered cases of political violence and protest actions around the world. In particular, they distinguish between:

- 1) battles;
- 2) explosions/remote violence;
- 3) violence against civilians;
- 4) riots;
- 5) protests (with violent actions);
- 6) strategic developments (ACLED n.d.).

We can also mention the typology used by Erica Chenoweth and her co-authors, who forms the basis of various protest movements, the so-called campaigns. The researchers divide them into violent and non-violent; aimed at overthrowing the regime and achieving independence/autonomy (see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Chenoweth and Ulfelder 2017; Chenoweth and Shay 2020).

As we can see, all these typologies are related to the analysis of databases and their digitalization. Hence the typology is subordinated to the methodological tasks of digitalization of databases.

Among those not related to such bases, one can mention a rather old periodization given in the famous book by Edward Luttwak, '*Coup d'état: A Practical Handbook*,' which was published back in 1968 and, as the title suggests, serves as a practical guide for those who were preparing coups d'état (Luttwak 2016). The author combines the following forms into the general concept of 'coup d'état', as they are all associated with a change of power carried out by violent means (mainly armed, but not always). These are:

- 1) revolution;
- 2) civil war;
- 3) pronunciamiento;⁴
- 4) putsch;⁵
- 5) liberation;⁶
- 6) national liberation war, insurgency, *etc.*

Regarding the last (sixth) form of a coup d'état, Luttwak explains that in this form of internal conflict, the goal of the initiating party is not to seize power in the state, but

rather to create rival state structures. This explanation is not entirely clear; perhaps it is about the creation of parallel power structures, as happens in insurgency-guerrilla warfare (see below), or perhaps it is not simply about the seizure of power (this goal is always present), but rather about the creation of a new form of political or socio-political regime (e.g., popular democratic, socialist). In our opinion, Luttwak has artificially combined two or three types here: 6.1. National liberation movement (struggle) for independence, autonomy; 6.2. Struggle against foreign interventionists (as, e.g., in Vietnam they fought against the Americans); 6.3. Guerrilla movement, which can last for a very long time and is satisfied with the fact that the guerrilla regions have special forms of political government, which not only do not obey the central government, but also fight against it.

However, even with such an extension, this typology is clearly incomplete, not to mention the fact that modern political science has long since stopped classifying revolutions as coups d'état. A state (military) coup is singled out alongside revolutions as a special type of violent regime change.

Thus, in this periodization the term 'coup d'état' is used in a broad sense, and a more precise definition here would be 'a violent change of power/political regime'. However, since Luttwak wrote a practical handbook, he defined a coup d'état very broadly on the one hand, and on the other hand, he specifically identified different forms of armed coups d'état (pronunciamento and putsch).

However, this does not include the following forms of overthrow (or attempted overthrow) of the central government and/or regime: a) uprisings involving armed forces (e.g., the Decembrist rebellion); b) popular uprisings, which sometimes overthrow dynasties (this happened several times in China); c) rebellions, both spontaneous and planned – especially those led by a pretender to the throne (this is not a civil war in the strict sense, but a rebellion); d) others.

Furthermore, in addition to armed, violent, military coups, there are other types of coups d'état that can occur in a relatively peaceful manner: for example, a constitutional coup can result from winning the necessary majority in elections and a complete change in legislation. The most famous example is the seizure of power by the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in 1933. Another example is the regime change in South Africa as a result of elections in the 1990s (see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022b). This is also the organization of impeachment with the subsequent reorganization of the country. We designate such unarmed coups (along with some armed ones, but only those that with large-scale consequences) as the analogues of revolutions, since they occur in a way different from the revolutionary one (which requires so-called mass mobilization), yet in terms of outcomes they are comparable to revolutions (for more details, see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022b; Grinin, Grinin and Korotayev 2022).

2.2. Factors that contribute to or cause destabilization

It is evident that these factors are frequently discussed in various contexts, yet their systematization is obviously insufficient.

Below we highlight: 1) the triggers of destabilizing events and processes; 2) the ambivalent events that may or may not be sources of destabilization, with the latter option occurring more frequently; 3) the factors that contribute to destabilization in most cases.

Triggers for societal destabilization can be diverse, often even minor ones (although in retrospect, of course, signs and ‘cracks’ are found that indicate increasing problems, but at least they are not immediately apparent to everyone). Such events can be compared to a mudslide in the mountains. It may not occur, but could happen even as a result of a loud cry. In other words, in a bifurcation situation, any event can become critical. So with the accumulation of contradictions in society, the likelihood of such an outcome increases. A corruption scandal, the assassination of a leader or even an ordinary person, *etc.*, can become a trigger, especially when unrest in society is present. We have defined the general revolutionary situation as an unstable situation of fragile state of peace in society, where any crisis can lead to the immediate creation of revolutionary situation and, under favorable circumstances, a revolution (Grinin 2020a, 2022a). However, a general crisis situation that leads to destabilization may also have a non-revolutionary nature (*e.g.*, in the case of ethnic, racial or religious hostility).

The actors causing destabilization and the ambivalent causes. It is possible to identify factors and events that have a consistently destabilizing effect or directly cause it in the majority of cases. These include wars, coups, revolutions, natural disasters, crises, *etc.* They are discussed in more detail below. However, there are also factors that occasionally (and in many cases, but still not in most cases) have a destabilizing effect. But this depends on the characteristics of the society (place) and circumstances at the time. Let us consider these ambivalent factors, in particular within the framework of democratic processes.

1) Elections. It would seem that the purpose of elections in democratic countries is precisely to ensure that the transfer of power occurs with minimal upheavals. However, it is no coincidence that elections (their conduct and results) frequently become the inception of color revolutions (as well as revolutions in general). In countries with a divided or incomplete democracy,⁷ or where democratic elections have only recently been introduced, or in situations of persistent social confrontation, they can become an impetus for considerable destabilization, which can result in terror, civil war, and societal division, *etc.* (*e.g.*, the elections of 1933 in Germany, 1991 in Russia and other republics of the USSR, the elections of 2004 in Ukraine, and the 2020 elections in the USA, all had significant impact on the political and social environment in their respective countries).

2) Election campaigns. In some cases they can have an even more destabilizing effect than the election results themselves (*e.g.*, the event of 2020 in the US illustrates this point).

3) The most significant decisions are taken by the democratic process. This may be related to legislation, a decision, or a referendum (such as the Brexit). For example, the year 2023 in Israel was marked by sustained and persistent protests against proposed amendments to the judicial system.

2.3. Causes of destabilizing events. A Classification

Below we list the causes of destabilization events (some of them are objective in nature, while others depend on human actions; however, some of these actions do not have the goal of achieving destabilization, while others, on the contrary, have this particular goal). However, the same phenomena can be considered in different contexts as a cause, condition, trigger of destabilization, and as the process of destabilization itself. For example, unsuccessful military operations far from the capital will cause destabilization if the situation deteriorates further, while a war in a certain territory, refugees, devastation, *etc.* – this is destabilization itself. The factors that can be attributed to destabilizing events are highlighted in italics.

1. *Crises* of various kinds (including those related to debt, currency, economy, religion, politics, *etc.*, which in themselves contribute to a weakening of stability and lead to protests, coups, unrest and revolutions).

2. *External shocks, especially those associated with a sharp change in the economic situation.*⁸

3. The rapid restructuring of the foundations of society (including accelerated modernization and reform, *etc.*). In any case, this contributes to a reduction in stability and provides the basis for protests, coups, unrest, and revolutions. The Perestroika in the USSR serves a vivid example of this phenomenon.

4. The government's inability to protect the population from crime and terror (*e.g.*, Islamic radicals in Africa [Grinin 2020b]; drug dealers in Colombia); as well as from a high level of crime – sometimes with the connivance of the authorities, who create a situation of chaos in order to have a pretext for declaring a state of emergency. This also leads to attempts by the population to organize self-defense, to enhance regional autonomy and this further weakens the center. The following point further develops the theme of weakening the center.

5. The weakening of the center and the growing influence of local elites and forces results in a loss of legitimacy and the establishment of new relationships, as well as clashes. A provisional quasi-order is established, which can be disrupted, for example, by the struggle of criminal groups.

6. The occurrence of *natural disasters* can result in a loss of control, as well as rampant crime and looting (a notable example of this is hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005⁹). Pandemics represent a particularly severe case of destabilization.

7. The long-term existence of a society in a state of *general revolutionary situation* (characterized by constant confrontation, protests, clashes, *etc.* [Grinin 2020a, 2022b]; see also above).

8. The deliberate undermining of the foundations and leading institutions of society, which entails constant confrontation with the orthodox, conservatives, trying to maintain the status quo.¹⁰

9. The accelerated and encouraged migration process (which has the potential to undermine social order in a number of cases; *e.g.*, in France, migrants have repeatedly staged mass and protracted protests and riots).

10. An excessive attachment (of political, ethnic, religious, ideological nature and via obligations) to ethnic enclaves in adjacent/neighborhood territory can have a destabi-

lizing effect both within a country and beyond its borders (two examples of this are Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and Donbass in Ukraine).

11. *Terror and anti-terror activities* (both anti-government and pro-government) can result in the loss of stability.

12. The deliberate promotion of discord and dissatisfaction with regard to a range of circumstances and/or groups (including through the use of propaganda).

13. *Mass riots and/or protests*. They can manifest in a number of ways, including revolutionary movements that do not result in a revolution (as evidenced by the ‘yellow vests’ phenomenon in France in 2019), protest campaigns (e.g., in France against pension reform); they can be pogroms (e.g., ethno-national) and some outbreaks of violence (the recent examples are riots in Russian Dagestan and Netherlands related to anti-Semitic sentiments).

All this greatly influences the potential for destabilization, the formation of unique types of traps and the emergence of revolutionary or other destabilization situations.

3. Typology of Destabilizing Events and Phenomena

Types of typologies. It is not possible to speak of any single correct typology. As with any other form of classification, its nature is connected with the scientific task. Therefore, there can be a wide range of typologies for destabilization events. We have previously discussed the division into the following categories:

- 1) armed vs. unarmed;
- 2) violent vs. non-violent;
- 3) external vs. internal.

We can also define 4) conditionally slow/evolutionary and sharp/revolutionary events. The first are associated with a gradual decline of society, nation, and system, resulting in degradation and subsequent resolution. We will deal with this dichotomy in the section on the change of world order. We are currently observing a period of slow degradation and destabilization in economically declining regions of many countries, including the USA. It can result either in a relatively gradual resolution and disintegration or in a sharp explosion and powerful destabilization. Thus, the gradual decline of the hegemon of the world order will result in its defeat or weakening within a short time period (as was the case with Great Britain during the Second World War).

An important aspect of the typology of destabilization is 5) the scale of events (which is especially relevant in the context of the project for which this article has been prepared).

Here we distinguish the following events:

- World-systemic events: global crises, destruction of the world order; the fall of a central world-systemic power or opposing force (see Grinin, Korotayev 2012; Grinin 2020b; 2022b); world wars; new phenomena, including globalist attempts to change the world-systemic situation; waves of revolutions (which can be world-systemic or regional [Grinin, Grinin, Korotayev 2022]).
- Regional (including regional revolutionary waves (e.g., the ‘Arab Spring’ [Grinin, Issaev, Korotayev 2016]; as well as acute conflicts between regional leaders vying for regional hegemony).

- Intercountry.
- Intracountry.
- Provincial.
- Local events (they can also play an important role if the situation in society is explosive).
- In specific sectors of society or its institutions (*e.g.*, the military, police, religious organizations, *etc.*).

Finally, the division of events 6) by forms of the overthrow of existing regime and power struggle. We have seen such attempts above, in particular in (Luttwak 2016), but these typologies appeared incomplete. Let us present our typology of destabilization by forms (methods) of regime overthrow (change) and power struggle (respectively, including and attempts at overthrow):

1. A military coup.
2. Coup d'etat conducted through a close conspiracy.
3. A constitutional coup d'etat.
4. A revolution.
5. A civil war.
6. An insurgent (guerrilla) war against the government.
7. Military uprisings (*e.g.*, numerous Janissary uprisings in Turkey in the provinces), including such a variety as 'praetorian', that is, conspiracies or uprisings using especially privileged, palace troops (guards, *etc.*; the Istanbul Janissaries in Turkey also belonged to this type).
8. Popular uprisings (there are many sub-variants here: peasant, Cossack, urban; uprisings of the nobility, gentry).
9. Ethno-religious uprisings.
10. Anti-government rebellions.
11. Terror tactics with the aim of changing the regime, eliminating competitors, establishing a despotic regime, *etc.* (a striking example is that of Ivan the Terrible and his oprichnina regime).
12. The disintegration of the country caused by weakening of the center (USSR).
13. Change of regime due to war, natural disasters or emergency situations.
14. Changes in the regime due to the defeat and challenging peace conditions (Weimar Germany).
15. National liberation struggle (war).
16. Insurgent/guerrilla war with an external invader.
17. Capture/annexation of part of the territory.
18. Occupation of the entire territory.
19. Restructuring of the political system of the occupied country.
20. Intervention with the objective to overthrow the regime.
21. The overthrow (or attempted overthrow) through the use of threats or sanctions.
22. The establishment of international control (or condominium) on the territory.

It is evident that our typology is much more comprehensive than the above-mentioned one, although it is also obviously incomplete. We should also note that items 1 to 13 represent internal forms of destabilizing events aimed at the struggle for power and regime change (however, they can, of course, be connected with external ones: thus, a revolution or a conspiracy can be inspired from the outside); then come internal forms of destabilizing events connected with external events; and finally, external forms of destabilization.

SECTION 2. The World Order

The analysis of the current and predicted future world order is a very significant task. In this article, we will focus only on a few aspects of this complex topic and will briefly dwell on some patterns of change in world order systems. It is worth emphasizing that the history of the world order can provide valuable insights in this direction, as well as explain some approaches (including analogies) that can be useful for analyzing the current state and predicting future transformations.

1. On Theories of World Order and Their Shortcomings

Theories of world order. Many studies have been devoted to analyzing the history of world order, its evolution and leaders, as well as forecasting the characteristics of the emerging world order (see, *e.g.*, Attali 1991; Brzezinski 1997; Zakaria 2008; Friedman 2009, 2011; Kissinger 1994, 2001, 2014).

The change of world leaders is the subject of classic studies including (Kennedy 1987; Modelski and Thompson 1996; Wallerstein 1987; Arrighi 1994, 2007; Zakaria 2008; see also Murray and Brown 2012). It is worth noting that the reports of the US National Intelligence Council (NIC 2008, 2017, 2021) are both indicative and strive for objectivity. They point out that shifts in the global balance of power and complex domestic political transformations have led, in particular, to the weakening of the United States' leadership position and to the strengthening of Asian countries and the Third World as a whole.

The decline of the United States and the West as a whole has been a significant topic in political science in recent decades (Buchanan 2002; Bell 2012; Reich, Lebow 2014; Olsen 2021). However, the inevitable decline of American power has been discussed since the 1970s, when the country faced political, economic, and currency crises at once. In the subsequent years, it was frequently predicted that Japan would replace the United States as the world's economic leader (see, *e.g.*, Kennedy 1987). However, the new surge of the technological wave in the United States in the 1990s, which took place against the backdrop of economic stagnation in Japan, demonstrated the inaccuracy of such views. The leadership of the United States not only proved to be quite strong, but also rose to a new level as a result of the collapse of the communist bloc and the USSR. However, it was precisely from the 1990s that the number of forecasts regarding the inevitable weakening of American hegemony and the coming emergence of Asia as a leader began to increase (see, *e.g.*, Colson, Eckerd 1991; Todd 2003; Wallerstein 1987, 2003; Kupchan 2002).

Their main shortcomings are: political engagement; excessive ideologization; sometimes the lack of a deep understanding of the mechanisms of the new order; country and bloc approaches often prevail, but there should also be a global view. There is a misunderstanding of the totality of American hegemony; therefore, when they predict that China will assume the role of the United States (see, *e. g.*, Komlosy, 2019; Vieira, 2022), they fail to take into account the PRC's inability to fully replicate the leadership functions of the United States (Grinin, Tsirel, Korotayev, 2015; Grinin, Korotayev 2015; Grinin, Grinin, Malkov 2023; Zakaria 2008; Wohlforth, Brooks 2016). They also ignore the struggle between Americanists and globalists as the most important component of the change in the world order (see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2021c; 2022b). It is worth noting that there is underestimation of some fundamentally new phenomena and trends, including: a) the inevitability of a return to globalization; b) the influence of the demographic factor (the growing Third World and depopulation in the West); c) the growing role of Africa.

The shortcomings of the theory of cycles of world hegemony are as follows:

1) the hundred-year and longer cycles are too long, while in reality the pace of world order change is faster. Therefore, the cycles of hegemony do not completely, and sometimes even significantly, coincide with the cycles of the world order. It would be also inaccurate to consider Genoa or Holland as genuine power centers. Giovanni Arrighi (1994) offers a more precise description, speaking about the cycles of capital accumulation, which may coincide with military-political hegemonies, or may not coincide;

2) only one model of change of world hegemon and world order is taken into account (see below);

3) it is not taken into account that it is not a change of leader, but rather a change of system (*i.e.*, a concert of great powers will replace the leader).

2. On Some Patterns of Change in World Order Systems

It is possible to distinguish several phases (systems) of the European and then world order (see Grinin 2016a, 2016b; Grinin *et al.* 2017; Grinin, Ilyin and Andreev 2016; Zakaria 2008). The analysis of the evolution of these systems leads us to some important conclusions (which are presented in various forms by different researchers [see, *e.g.*, Brzezinski 1997; Kennedy 1987; Kissinger 1994, 2001, 2014; Zakaria 2008; Arrighi, Silver 1999; Arrighi 2007] and are well-represented in journalistic discourse). However, they are less common in a holistic system. We present our approach:

1. Like any complex and dynamic system, **the system of world order**, goes through several (life) *phases of development*. The number of phases to be identified may depend on the scientific objectives. There may be distinguished three phases: formation, flourishing, and decline. Another scenario suggests four phases: formation, expansion, stabilization, and disintegration.¹¹ Or there could be five, with the addition of a further phase to the previous one: formation, expansion, stabilization, degradation (decline) and disintegration. Perhaps the latter sequence is the most appropriate.
2. We can also add the phase after the collapse of the previous world order, during which the outlines of the new one are taking shape, but against the backdrop of

an intense competition for hegemony. In this regard, the Second World War represents a particularly noteworthy period.

3. One can agree that all these phases represent a certain cyclical pattern, namely cycles of world order, which a number of researchers have termed cycles of hegemony.

In the phase of decline/destruction/degradation, there is often a tendency for the center of the world order to lose the ability to assess the situation adequately, and accordingly, to make actions that objectively lead to a further weakening of the center and exacerbate international relations. This is precisely the situation we are currently observing in relation to the behavior of the USA and the West as a whole.

4. Herodotus (see Note 11) observed that at the zenith of power (and, we might add, particularly when it begins to decline), the behavior of powerful states (in our context, the central power of the world order) is characterized by arrogance and injustice towards the less powerful. Today, we see this from the United States, including towards its allies, and from Europe and other American allies towards other countries. Ultimately, this accelerates the decline of great powers.
5. In the past, the attempts to change the world order, unfortunately, has always been associated with wars. Therefore, at the present moment we must be prepared for this and extremely cautious to avoid a major war.
6. Competitors emerge at various phases of the development of the world order system. Accordingly, there is a continuous competition for leadership. This can occur either at the stage of establishing a new world order, when the outgoing leader is replaced by competitors (as was the USSR in relation to the USA), or at the stage of the beginning of decline (Germany in relation to Great Britain).
7. The presence of competitors can be both a blessing, since it keeps the world leader on his toes, and a disaster if the competitor wins and the leader is unwilling to give up his position.
8. The lack of a competitor generates and accelerates the decline of the leader.
9. Ultimately, the change in the world order is determined by the change in the balance of power (for various approaches to the theory of the balance of power, see, *e.g.*, Waltz 1979: 116–123).¹²
10. It is of utmost importance to recognise the periods of reconfiguration of the world order and the World System, during which global disorder and the intensification of the struggle for hegemony become evident. Perhaps it makes sense to identify these periods as a distinct phase.
11. A hegemon does not typically possess all the advantages, but rather a few capabilities (financial, technological, *etc.*).
12. The fact that the USA combines almost all the advantages is an exception. This means that we should not expect the exception to become the rule. In other words, it is unlikely that the US will be replaced by a leader of the same power (see above on China's possibility). Typically, the model that emerged was either a concert of major powers or a duumvirate (as was the case after the First World War, when Britain and France came to the forefront). After the Second

World War, a special model, a bipolar system, was established (comprising the USA and the USSR).

13. From here we predict that the next system of world order will take the form of a concert of major powers, or more precisely, a combination of powers and blocs (*e.g.*, the EU).¹³

Instead of a Conclusion. Destabilization and World Order

As stated at the very beginning of this article, destabilization is a significant factor in changing the world order. Otherwise, there would be no change in the existing order. However, periods of destabilization precede changes in the world order system. Without such periods, a transition would not occur; yet it is important that this period is not excessively destructive.

We have come to the conclusion that the World System is now entering a period of significant turbulence that will last for about 10–20 years. This turbulence will be associated with the processes of transformation and reconfiguration of the world order and the global political landscape (Grinin, Grinin 2022a; Grinin 2023). It can, and most likely will, involve armed conflicts and a growing threat of major war (we hope this will not come to pass). This will be a kind of transition period to a more stable new world order, the formation of which will be challenging. So these processes cannot but affect potential manifestations of destabilization in different countries.

The main vectors of this reconfiguration are the weakening of the former center of the World System (the USA and the West), the simultaneous strengthening of the positions of a number of peripheral states and, in general, the increase in the role of developing countries. It is important to keep in mind that catching-up (of the political component of globalization to the economic one, since the former has lagged behind the latter) occurs in fits and starts and means more or less acute political and geopolitical crises in certain regions. We consider crises and upheavals, like those in the Middle East and Ukraine, as reconfiguration crises that are simultaneously geopolitical in nature. These crises require a change in the world order (and they are intensifying and drawing in many countries and interested parties). At the same time, the emergence of powerful and potentially abrupt crises in different societies or regions is becoming increasingly probable. They can come suddenly, like an earthquake. And, continuing with geological comparisons, it is worth noting that just as tectonic shifts occur along the line of the most mobile earth's crust and at the boundary of tectonic plates, such reconfiguration crises also arise in regions and societies that are the least stable and lie at the junctions of geopolitical 'plates'. This thesis, in our opinion, fully reflects the situation in Ukraine, where both society and territory have split, ultimately causing a military conflict and inevitably leading to further fractures (see Grinin 2023).

The geopolitical 'plates' meet at several unstable, including Transcaucasia (the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia for Karabakh are evidence of this), Central Asia, Western China (Tibet and Xiangjiang), West Africa (at the junction of Islamic and Tropical Africa), some regions of South America. These are quite unstable regions, where some signs of crisis are already appearing or are possible (but this does not mean that crises will necessarily occur).

Thus, the weakest (in terms of resistance to shocks) societies are the most vulnerable to destabilization. However, the reconfiguration processes that have started, with their characteristic instability processes, have affected not only the semi-peripheral zones, but also the core of the World System. The UK's Brexit has intensified instability processes not only in the UK itself (this is evidenced by a new rise of separatism in Scotland), but also in the European Union. In a number of the EU countries, there is a movement towards Euroscepticism, which has intensified due to sanctions against Russia, with the ensuing consequences. And Donald Trump as a new elected president affects and will affect the internal situation in the USA. Thus, it becomes obvious that in societies that were once very prosperous, there is a growing split.

At the beginning of the article, we spoke about the unique experiment in Europe. However, despite the importance of this experiment, which allowed European countries to change the political and economic organization peacefully and systematically, it created the only permanent and systematically functioning supranational entity in the world. However, this same experience shows that it is not yet possible to bring this experiment to its logical conclusion (dissolution of the main parameters of national sovereignty in the supranational and the formation of real supranational sovereignty). On the contrary, the system is at risk of disintegration.

Thus, we are in a whirlpool of destabilizing events that mean the erosion of the previously established world order. What the new order will be depends largely on great powers' goals and their responsibility.

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NOTES

¹ The book was first published in 1918. In predicting the decline of Europe, Spengler did not give exact dates, but indirectly assumed a period of about a hundred years. Therefore, his prediction can be considered quite accurate.

² As a result, discontent and mistrust towards the government, administrative structures, the electoral system, the institution of voting, the media, science, educational institutions, *etc.* is growing rapidly (see Grinin 2020a; Grinin, Korotayev 2020; Deneen 2018).

³ As an example of global changes, we can cite a COVID-19 pandemic which has greatly changed our lives and has been a powerful destabilizing factor. With respect to the world order, it should be kept in mind that global forces have, in one way or another, subjugated politicians and administrators at various levels (from cities to states) in dozens of countries around the world, as well as functionaries of almost all global and international organizations.

⁴ The author explains that this is the Spanish/South American version of a military coup, although many coups that have taken place in Africa also correspond to this description.

⁵ According to Luttwak, a putsch is a phenomenon of the military and the short post-war period. It is carried out by a formal body within the armed forces and under their leadership. The term 'putsch' is most often used to define the South American version of a military coup.

⁶ Here Luttwak refers to a regime change brought about by external forces, citing as an example the establishment of the communist regime in Romania in 1947 (for more on such forms, see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022b). Let us add that modern color revolutions often resemble such 'liberation'.

⁷ A divided democracy is characterised by a highly polarised electorate with distinct and often incompatible voting blocs (that may be based on ethno-racial, religious or other factors).

⁸ The oil shocks associated with the sharp increase in OPEC oil prices in the 1970s had a significant destabilizing effect on the situation in the United States and Europe, causing the most powerful crisis there since the Second World War and strengthening the protest movement. The fall in oil prices in the 1980s was one of the contributing factors to the collapse of the USSR, as well as the destabilization in several oil-exporting countries, such as Algeria. The continuing decline in oil prices resulted in a default by Russia in 1998.

⁹ Another example is the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti in 2010, which resulted in deaths of 140,000 people, left 3 million individual homeless, and from which the country has still not fully recovered.

¹⁰ It is worth citing a notable idea from the publication by Edward Luttwak (2016). He emphasizes that a coup can be successful only with a thorough secret preparation, that is, if the conspirators gradually seize power from within the existing system, occupying the necessary positions and recruiting suitable individuals. In other words, there is first a gradual takeover, followed by a more forceful one. This is also very typical of global conspirators (for more details, see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2021a; 2021b). In short, the chain can be lengthy.

¹¹ Herodotus already distinguished three stages. In Jawaharlal Nehru's presentation it sounds like this: history of nations goes through three stages: success, the consequence of success – arrogance and injustice, and as a result of this – fall (Nehru 2004).

¹² The balance of power among leading states in the global arena is often unstable, largely due to the uneven pace of development across various communities, as well as technological and organizational breakthroughs. These factors provide certain advantages to certain societies (Kennedy 1987).

¹³ By 1943, the bipolar world predicted decades earlier had finally taken shape, with the balance of military power once again aligning with the global distribution of economic resources (Kennedy 1987).

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