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## Evolution of World Order\*

Leonid E. Grinin

### Abstract

*The present article analyzes the world order in the past, present and future as well as the main factors, foundations and ideas underlying the maintaining and change of the international and global order. The first two sections investigate the evolution of the world order starting from the ancient times up to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The third section analyzes the origin and decline of the world order based on the American hegemony. The author reveals the contradictions of the current unipolar world and explain in what way globalization has become more profitable for the developing countries but not for the developed ones. The paper also explains the strengthening belief that the US leading status will inevitably weaken. In this connection the author discusses the alternatives of American strategy and the possibility of the renaissance of American leadership. The last section presents a factor analysis which allows stating that the world is shifting toward a new balance of power and is likely to become the world without a leader. The new world order will consist of a number of large blocks, coalitions and countries acting within a framework of rules and mutual responsibility. However, the transition to a new world order will take certain time (about two decades). This period, which we denote as the epoch of new coalitions, will involve a reconfiguration of the World System and bring an increasing turbulence and conflict intensity.*

**Keywords:** *world order, evolution, American hegemony, American leadership, transition to a new world order.*

### Introduction

Soon after World War I and in connection with the formation of the League of Nations the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson used the term ‘new world order’, hoping that it would finally become possible to create a system for maintaining international peace and security; meanwhile, the political order had already existed in the Western world for several centuries. In historical terms it would be more precise to speak about the international order when the European order

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transformed into the global one. Moreover, prior to the European order the inchoate international order could be found in other regions of the World System (the most famous here being the Pax Romania). Thus, with respect to globalization, the search for the origins of the world order leads back to the ancient times. Yet, in historical terms the notion of the world order seems rather amorphous. The humanity has passed a long and perilous way to the establishment of certain international rules and foundations of co-existence. It is worth analyzing them just in terms of the formation (and development) of the world order and the way in which the obtained experience can be employed for making predictions on the forthcoming transformations.

The notions of globalization and world order have become rather closely connected today. Within the political realm globalization considerably affects the transformation of the states' sovereign prerogatives since it contributes to the change and reduction of the scope of the states' sovereign powers (Grinin 2009, 2012a, 2012b). All this gradually creates the foundations for the world order whose outlines (although discussed since the end of the Cold War) are actually just being formed. It is obvious that the unfolding globalization cannot but complete with some institutionalizing of the relations in the foreign policy sphere although this path is difficult and ambiguous.

The present article is devoted to the analysis of the world order and this is appropriately manifested in its structure.

### **Prehistory of the World-Order Formation**

Politics as a realm of relations connected with distribution of power (Smelser 1988) seems to have appeared around the age of the Upper Paleolithic Revolution. The political sphere had started to separate already before the emergence of the state at the level of complex societies (see Grinin and Korotayev 2009; Grinin 2012a). Moreover, the foreign policy, which implies relations between individual states, is virtually older than the domestic one.<sup>1</sup> However, it is evident that the relations between states could only emerge after a certain system of states had been established, and this happened only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE one could observe the upswing and downswing cycles of political hegemony (Frank and Gills 1993; see also Chase-Dunn *et al.* 2010). The most famous episodes of the struggle for hegemony in the core of the Afroeurasian world-system (in the Near East) are associated with the rises and falls of the Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian Kingdom (the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE), a clash between the New Kingdom of Egypt and the Hittite Empire (the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE), New Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Empire (the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> mil-

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<sup>1</sup> War used to be an important element of foreign policy (about primitive warfare see *e.g.*, Keeley 1996).

lennium BCE). At the time, the region was actually the most advanced (and the largest) part of the cultural oecumene. Thus, the clashes within its realm can be considered ancestral for the struggle for the global order. This struggle undoubtedly enhanced the links within the World System and supported its unity despite the discord among the ancient states (see Grinin and Korotayev 2013, 2014b). It also contributed to a quick diffusion of innovations, in particular, of iron metallurgy in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BCE. Unfortunately, from ancient times until the present the violent fights at external arenas remain the triggers for technological advances.

The struggle between nomadic and sedentary polities was one of the most important phenomena which defined the outlines of the World System political landscape; yet, in the present article I will not concern this issue as well as the period of the formation of the world empires in the Middle East, and history of the Roman and Chinese Empires (Qin, and later Han) (see Grinin and Korotayev 2013, 2014b). It is widely known that by the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Age of Discoveries (when globalization had started its new powerful expansion) the political landscape of the forming World System had experienced numerous transformations. Here one should note that the latter contributed to the initial development of certain ideas, principles, trends, and patterns which later would play an important role (and some still remain crucial) in the establishment of the global political order. Thus, the comprehension of these phenomena is extremely important for the analysis of the processes under study. First, with respect to long periods of time one can hardly ignore the fluctuations connected with the establishment or disrupting of a certain balance of power which could launch significant transformations. Such fluctuations are still present.

One can agree or disagree with Henry Kissinger's statement that the system of power balance has hardly ever existed in the human history (Kissinger 1994), but the notion itself of the balance of power is extremely significant (and Kissinger pays much attention to it). Second, one can distinguish some factors particularly influential for changing the balance. Along with the above-mentioned technological factor, the ideological factor also has a certain impact. For a long time the struggle for hegemony lacked an ideological constituent and simply indicated a ruler's success and might.

Starting from the Greco-Persian wars, there appeared the ideas of confrontation between Asia and Europe (and of the ideological pattern of the struggle between cultural center and barbarian periphery; the latter resembling the ideology of colonialism). In the Middle Ages, as a result of contradictions between Islam and Christianity, the ideological factor would make an important and permanent contribution to the formation of international order (see also below). Even today it persistently shows itself although it is not the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world, as they often interpret Samuel P. Hunting-

ton's ideas (1993, 1996). Speaking about ancient and medieval political ideas, one should mark the development of the idea of a legitimate political order within a state which can partially explain foreign policy. These and other principles gradually become institutionalized and during the Modern Age they start to form the basis of political order. This allows a more active interference into the international political processes which by their nature are weakly subject to control. And at present this trend is strengthening although with some fluctuations.

The Age of Discoveries introduced new vectors into the global order. First, the arena had actually expanded to a world-wide scale. Second, the started establishment and redistribution of colonial possessions would define the global policy during the following four or more centuries. Third, the started formation of the World-System core and periphery meant the development of the pattern which is still operating within the current international realm. With respect to Europe of the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century one can conventionally speak about a certain unstable balance after a number of devastating and long-lasting wars. However, as a result of the Age of Discoveries and especially of the started Reformation that balance was undermined for more than a century.

### **The Creation of the World Order**

The international order as a system of relations and ideas about the foundations that should underpin the relations between states and generally in the world, started to form in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when diplomatic relations were established alongside with future contours of the system of 'great powers' in Europe. The prototype of legal principles of international relation system emerged as a result of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia which finished the devastating Thirty Years war in Central Europe. Those principles had been developing for more than two hundred years (about the Westphalian system see, *e.g.*, Spruyt 2000). In this respect one should mark in the first place the 'sovereignty' concept which is manifested both in domestic and foreign policy primarily in the right of war and peace (see Grinin 2012b) and in the legitimate supreme power. It came to the forefront after the French revolution in 1789.

The Thirty Years war was the legacy of the sixteenth-century European tradition of religious wars. But at the same time, it introduced two new foreign policy principles, which later would be actively employed by the politicians, namely: 1) the maintenance of the international 'balance of power' through supporting the weaker coalition against the stronger one; and 2) the priority of national interests over other (religious, ideological, *etc.*) ones. For example, Richelieu formulated and actively implemented both these approaches (Kissinger 1994). As a result, although being a catholic state, France supported the weaker coalition of the Protestant states in their war against Habsburg Empire that strove for the world supremacy. At that time it was the diminished Habsburgs and disunited Germany which Richelieu (and later Louis XIV) considered

as France's major national objective which would allow control over tiny German principalities. Given the fact that Richelieu was a Catholic cardinal, it was a bold step which had made foreign policy even more cynical than before. Since that time one observes a trend when the foreign policy started to develop according to certain stratagems and principles.

### **The Main Factors Influencing the Formation of the European/World Order**

As already mentioned, within international relations framework the issue of the balance of power and its disruption is crucial for the perception of the states' foreign policy, as well as for the general pattern of the European and global relations. Deliberate foreign policy of some states (such as France, and later Britain) aimed at creating a number of military-political alliances enabled them to maintain and control the balance in their favor.<sup>2</sup> Bearing this in mind, one can better understand the peculiarities of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries' military alliances as well as the reasons of interchanges within them.

Undoubtedly, it was the geopolitical factor that laid the basis for such an order comprising multiple states and several strong powers and lacking a hegemon. In contrast, the Chinese geopolitical environment with China (the Celestial Empire) inevitably playing a central role in the region hampered the development of modern diplomacy based on a complex system of international relations with almost equal powers. The fundamental principles of the Chinese foreign policy evolved around such major issues as the protection of the state from the nomads through setting barbarians on each other and launching successful campaigns against nomads, *etc.* Therefore, it is not surprising that it was the European and not the Chinese model of international relations that was to a certain degree expanded to the global level.

The balance between powers could change due to a number of factors, including internal rebellions, fall of dynasties, *etc.* Among the long-term factors one should mention different growth rates of population, territory, wealth, industry, and commerce.<sup>3</sup> But all this should be converted into military power. The gunpowder and military revolutions (Downing 1992) led to the formation of advanced armies (McNeill 1982), which also contributed to state-building and formation of the new-type states (mature in our terms [see Grinin 2012a]). The results of the development of military technologies became evident in the course of successful Swedish (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), Prussian, and Russian (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) military campaigns. For our study, it is of particular im-

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<sup>2</sup> This is reflected in Lord Palmerston's claim that England has no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies. Its interests are eternal and perpetual.

<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese and Spanish came to the front after their colonial success and enormous wealth got from there while similar discoveries caused a gradual decline of the Italian trading states.

portance to distinguish the technological innovations convertible into military advantages, because this factor became increasingly influential with time. For instance, France and Britain won the Crimean war (1853–1856) due to their technological superiority over Russia.

With the emergence of large-scale armies and completed transition to industrial production principle (Grinin 2007) the state's overall economic power and supply with resources became the main determining factor. It was the total economic power of the anti-German coalition that led to Germany's defeat in both World Wars. Nowadays, different economic (and financial) indicators can help to define the trends of shifting balance of power.

Finally, the balance of power could be significantly although irregularly disrupted by a changing ideological paradigm. Since the latter significantly changed the perception of legitimacy of government and its actions, it also inevitably led to the exacerbation of international relations and wars between ideological enemies. The results of such violations manifested in the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, religious wars and later in the division of Europe into the Protestants and Catholics. The French Revolution (in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century) caused a new ideological crisis which undermined the sanctity of monarchy and aristocracy.

This was followed by a quarter-of-a-century-long chain of endless wars, coalitions, the triumph and fall of Napoleon's Empire and restoration of monarchies. The new ideological turn began after the First World War as a result of the deep crisis of the world order, and after the Second World War the ideological gap between socialism and capitalism became a determining factor for the new world order.

Although the performed factor analysis of the establishment and changes in the world order is far from being complete, it can explain the causes and results of the evolution of the world order, and can be employed to make predictions on the directions of the future world order development.

### **From a Concert of Europe to the World Wars**

The concert of great powers existed from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and according to Kissinger, it was a model of the world order which to some extent remains relevant even today (Kissinger 1994, 2014). Of course, the powers in the list alternated, and each change was associated with the shifts in the established world order. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Sweden could have gained the 'great power' status if not for the defeat in the Great Northern War with Russia, while Russia, on the contrary, joined the 'great powers concert'. Prussia joined this 'club' under Frederick II the Great in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the number of the great European powers remained the same (five – France, England, Prussia, Austria, and Russia) for about a century, until the unification of Germany and Italy, and later the rise of the USA and Japan. The shift in the European balance

of power occurred mainly due to (a) a successful public administration reform and army reorganizations (Russia and Prussia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are good examples here); (b) growing trade flows and wealth; and (c) a breakthrough in techno-economic sphere (made, *e.g.*, by Britain as a result of the so-called Agrarian Revolution and the final phase of the Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). Thus, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was Britain that controlled the balance of power in Europe, uniting in different alliances and joining or destroying coalitions. Meanwhile, the lag in socio-political transformations caused the decline of the former leading powers like Spain and Portugal, and left Genoa and Venice on the sidelines. The Austrian Empire and France had also considerably lost their positions; and the technological backwardness of Holland, which used to be 'favorite' in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Arrighi 1994), together with its defeat in the war, led to the loss of political status.

The Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815 and the Holy Alliance of the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian monarchs were significant thresholds in the development of principles and forms of control over international relations. The monarchs sought to maintain Europe's status quo and cooperated to undermine revolutions. This new ideological turn marked a return to the principle of legitimate (monarchical) power. Then, the concept and an effective system of the 'concert of Europe' emerged which involved the above-mentioned five great powers and was designated to maintain equilibrium and balance of power and to escape wars.<sup>4</sup> It implied a multilateral diplomacy and opportunities of regular international conferences and existed until the Crimean war of 1853.

The increasing colonial activity involved the Asian countries (China, Japan, Burma, *etc.*) into the global affairs; meanwhile, many new states emerged in Latin America. That was the way how the world order originated with Europe still remaining the main arena.

The desire to preserve legitimate governments persisted in the European policy for three decades, at times running counter the countries' national interests. However, the revolutionary wave of 1848–1849, industrialization in Europe and the change of regime in France had undermined this ideology. It was replaced by a much more direct and cynical one, associated with political maneuvering in search for a combination of alliances, which would allow getting profits regardless the ideological proximity or dislikes. In Bismarck's Germany, this policy was called 'Realpolitik'. This disappearance of the ideological bias explains to a certain extent the existence of various and rather unstable alliances and coalitions of the great powers in the period between the 1870s and early 1900s. Generally recognized as a master of combinations and compromises, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck initiated the creation of such unions.

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<sup>4</sup> One should note here that since the contemporary world divergence from the unipolarity, it is rather probable that the future world system will be a kind of such 'concert' of some leading coalitions.



As to the causes of tensions and conflicts between powers, they were mostly observed at the final stage of the division of colonial possessions and spheres of influence.

The German Confederation was established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (to replace the Holy Roman Empire destroyed by Napoleon). Although the number of German States reduced from three hundred to three dozens, Central Europe generally remained weak. Meanwhile, this was considered as an essential part of the balance of power and such situation with Germany was the major objective of the national policy of France, Britain, and other powers. The rivalry for the influence in this part of Germany determined the policy of Prussia and Austria.

That is why the unification of Germany under the Prussian rule became the major change in Europe of the early 1870s, resulting from several victorious wars, Bismarck's shrewd policy and a number of mistakes made by Austria and France. This drastically changed the balance of power, since in the center of Europe a new state emerged which was stronger than any other power in Europe. Thus, France got an urgent necessity to find an ally, since after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war it dreamed of revenge, but remained weaker than Germany. Bismarck in his turn was afraid of the war on two fronts, and therefore sought an alliance with Russia. But finally, after Bismarck's resignation, the conflict between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans led to the Dual Alliance (1892) signed by Russia and France against Germany, and then there was the agreement between France and Britain (the Entente cordiale) in 1904 which transformed into triple Entente with Russia in 1907. Germany's military and economic strengthening made Britain take its favorite strategy of joining the less powerful group in order to weaken the leading continental power (*i.e.* Germany). The rapid industrial development in all countries, the explosive technological innovations, a considerable change of war means – all these pushed rivals (especially Germany) to change the balance of power by means of a military victory.

### **From the Balance of Power to Bipolarity**

Thus, the new military-political alliances emerged in Europe and divided it into two opposing blocks. Eventually, this led to the First World War, which changed the global political landscape and the balance of power. Then, there was established the first international institution – the League of Nations – which attempted to influence the formation of new principles of international relations, and besides, the system of international conventions continued to develop. Nevertheless, after the World War II the new stable world order had existed for quite a short period. The powerful changes that occurred, including the emergence of the USSR, the development of new weapons and the great

depression, the reluctance of Germany to recognize the imposed limits and other factors exacerbated the relations and unleashed another war.

The order established after World War II differed significantly from the previously existing one. First, there were only two strong powers (the USA and the USSR), in other words, the world became bipolar with two military blocks (NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization). The military core of this balance was nuclear equations and deterrence strategy. Secondly, it was based on ideological foundations which the previous world order had lacked. It is possible that it was ideological bias that supported a rather long existence of the post-war world order.

Generally speaking, a stable world order recognized and supported by the leading actors usually endured from three to four decades, or even less. Thus, the system that had existed before the French Revolution (1789) had worked for less than 30 years. It was established after the Seven Years' War (*i.e.*, after 1763) and destroyed in 1790–1791. The Order established after the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna was destroyed by the revolutions of 1848–1849 and the Crimean war, and had existed for less than thirty-five years. The subsequent system of world order began to form after the emergence of the German Empire (1871), but developed only by the early 1890s and was destroyed by the First World War. Therefore, it endured for less than two decades. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) was violated by Germany in 1935. Thus, the world order established after the Second World War existed from 1945 to 1990, *i.e.* for 45 years, and that was an achievement.

## **The Issues of the Current World Order**

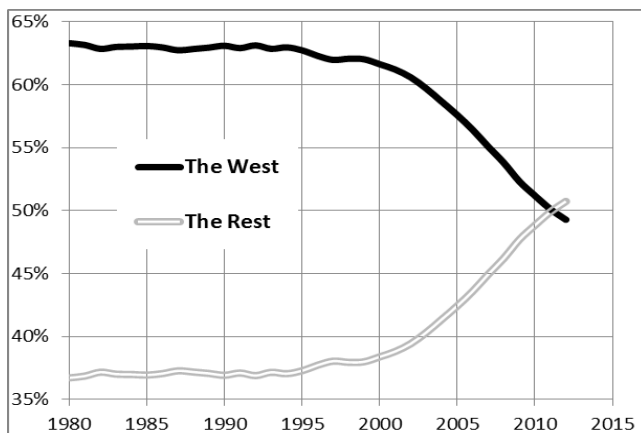
### **The Late Twentieth-Century Shift to Pax Americana. Globalization and the Crisis of the Unipolar World**

The collapse of the socialist bloc and the Soviet Union destroyed the previous bipolar world order and led to the establishment of a unipolar world. Obviously, the ideas about the new world order that began to develop right in the late 1980s and early 1990s, often reflected the belief in the absolute domination of the Western economies, institutions and ideas (see, *e.g.*, Attali 1991) and became almost synonymous to the idea of Pax Americana (see, *e.g.*, Brzezinski 1998). Thus, Henry Kissinger's views (Kissinger 1994, 2001) on the new balance of power were no exception.

However, while the unipolar order was formed and developed, the world balance shifted once again. This was caused by the countries' uneven economic and technological development. Over the last three or four decades, globalization has been constantly and significantly affecting the changes in the world order. It eventually shifted the balance of economic power towards the developing world. One of the main reasons was the so-called 'deindustrialization' which

meant a transition of a significant part of production, economy and technology from developed to developing countries (for more details see Grinin and Korotayev 2014a, 2015). The result is the Western countries' weakening economic growth and their diminishing role in the global arena, while the rest of the world (developing countries) increases the influence (see Fig. 1).

Thus, during the two decades starting from 1991, at the background of weakening Europe and continuing stagnation in Japan one observed the rise of economic giants in Asia (China and India) as well as the emergence of a number of rapidly developing states (from Mexico to Malaysia and Ethiopia) which preserve their growth rates (although with some difficulties) and are likely to take the leading positions in the world in the quite nearest future.



**Fig. 1.** Dynamics of the share of the West and the rest of the world ('the Rest') in the global GDP after 1980 (based on the World Bank data on the GDP calculated in 2005 purchasing power parity international dollars)

Source: World Bank 2014: NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.KD (Grinin and Korotayev 2015).

## World Order in the Past, Present and Future

**The decline of the American and Western leadership. Is the revival possible?** By the 1990s, the USA, unlike the former world leaders, had concentrated a wide range of leadership aspects: from technological, financial and military to scientific and cultural. That was the first (and probably, the last) case in world history. But in 2001, being at the peak of their might, the USA was stricken by unexpected 9/11 events. That was a turning point after which many characteristics and patterns of domestic and foreign policy have become excessive. The USA abandons their own principles of freedom and start surveillance over their own citizens, as well as the leaders and population of other countries.

It starts to ignore the international law and principle of sovereignty (Herland 2014).

Pretty soon, during the financial and economic crisis of 2006–2010, it became quite evident that the USA had been losing their leading positions. However, the talks about an inevitable decline of the American might began already in the 1970–1980s (see, *e.g.*, Vogel 1979; Kennedy 1987). Since the 1990s, one observes an increasing number of political forecasts predicting an imminent decline of the American supremacy and simultaneous coming to the front of Asian economies (Attali 1991; Colson and Eckerd 1991; Arrighi 1994; Frank 1997; Buchanan 2002; Kupchan 2002; Todd 2003; Wallerstein 2003; Mandelbaum 2005; NIC 2008, 2012; Grinin 2010; Grinin and Korotayev 2010a, 2010b, 2015). The increasing negative phenomena in America at the background of the Asian countries' success, made the idea of the American decline more feasible, causing either a feeling of triumph or a concern depending on one's preferences. Since 2008, there have appeared more publications arguing that America's power is decreasing, that it is no longer an absolute leader and that the unipolar world is being transformed, *etc.* (see, *e.g.*, Milne 2008; Zakaria 2008; Haass 2008). Many of such articles had rather striking headlines, for instance: 'America's Fall is a Dangerous Opportunity for its Enemies' (Tisdall 2008); 'America's Power Cracks and is Broken into Pieces' (Gray 2008); 'Sun Setting on the American Century' (Reid 2008); 'Is It the End of the American Era?' (Kennedy 2008). Such articles appeared and still appear on a rather regular basis (see, *e.g.*, Bremmer 2015; Klare 2015). Sooner or later the United States of America will no longer be able to lead the world in its common way, and it can result in a drastic change of the geopolitical landscape (for more details see Grinin 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Grinin and Korotayev 2010b, 2011, 2015).

In 2008, Farid Zakaria, a famous political expert and editor of the *Newsweek International*, called for the USA to become a global mediator and develop, in cooperation with other countries, new rules for the world order. He wrote that the USA had two alternatives. Either it can reinforce the existing world order via cooperation with new great powers. However, it should compromise on some of its power and privileges, and agree that future world will have variety of opinions and different points of view. Otherwise, America may just passively observe how 'the rise of the rest' will rip to shreds of the world order that have been built for the latest 60 years (Zakaria 2008). But he was wrong. The USA, having hardly recovered from the crisis, chose the third way – to undermine the power of its competitors and thus, preserve their position of the only superpower in the world. These 'efforts' have been increasing turbulence in the world in recent years (Heuvel 2015). All this means that we will face much more difficulties than we could on the way to a new world order (not American), which will be established sooner or later.

But still the question of whether the ‘sunset’ of the USA can probably turn into its new ‘sunrise’ remains open for discussions because many Americans will hardly put up with such a situation. That is why it is worth considering the arguments of those who believe that the USA can restore its power again.

First of all, the stabilization of the American economy after the crisis supports the ideas that the American age will last a long way down the road. Also, many people hope for a technological or other miracle which will revive the American power, or for the US ability to control the rivals (see also Milne 2008; Kennedy 2008; Bremmer 2015). Technology, as well as a breakthrough in innovations, has quite a strong influence on changing the power balance and formation of a new balance. We have already stated our hypotheses that a new powerful technological wave will start in the 2030–2040s (see Grinin 2007; Grinin and Grinin 2015). The model of the new world order will strongly depend on who will lead this new technological pattern, especially if these innovations are converted into the military supremacy. Today's developing world invests more and more into technology and has achieved much in some spheres – for example, India is the world leader in Earth's remote sensing. Quite recently, it has become the first to put a satellite into orbit, which is created for stereo photography of the Earth surface at the height of 618 kilometers.

But it is quite clear that the USA holds the leading position as a claimant upon this technological lead, and thus it has an opportunity to preserve its world leadership. Moreover, today the USA has much more financial resources for this, not mentioning the remaining control over the global financial and information flows. There is, however, an important trend that should be marked out. During the last decades the American transnational corporations have shown more and more separation from the native state, where they feel cramped, thus involuntarily playing into the hands of developing countries. The USA's new economic partnerships (see below) can strengthen this trend, which is a great deal. The same way, the English technology and funds caused the rise of the USA, India, Canada, and Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while Britain itself ceased to be the world leader.

On the one hand, the world financial elite has become quite mobile, and the world becomes global and ‘digitalized’ to the extent that borders and territories will be of no account for big money and its owners. So it seems that one more reset of the world order will hardly destabilize the position of the World-System center. But on the other hand, if the companies are predominantly active outside the USA, then the American population can get poorer, and while the inequality in the country is growing, the internal social tension can increase.

On the one hand, the US population is getting older, and very soon white population among young people will be overgrown by the non-white. All this may aggravate social conflicts. On the other hand, the USA is still attractive for immigrants, which bring human capital of high quality to the country (scientists,

analysts, and engineers). In short, the processes will be rather complicated, and as any future processes, they may reveal quite unexpected phenomena.

### **Problems of the Decline of the American Leadership with Regard to the World System and the Signs of the 'Global Disorder'**

The burden of the only superpower turns out to be beyond America's strength (Klare 2015). It should be taken into account that the USA will face not only other nations' wishes but also regional and sometimes world-scale interests. One can hardly admit that the US interests are the interests of the world. Besides, it is inconceivable to carry this burden of a superpower for indeterminate amount of time, interfering into everything. It is no wonder that even claims for this are becoming overwhelming and the reaction to the lack of power – more and more nervous.

At the same time, some political analysts and economists' hopes for a prompt and avalanching failure of the USA are groundless: it probably will proceed gradually while objective circumstances, including the growth of peripheral countries, promote it. As the connoisseur of great powers, Paul Kennedy notes this departure will be long (Kennedy 2008; NIC 2008; Zakaria 2008). Besides, one should note that the world is still interested in the US leadership (see, *e.g.*, Barber 2014).

Indeed, the weakening of the US leadership brings a bunch of problems with it. It is widely suggested that the USA position will be occupied by the EU, China or someone else (from India to Russia; more often they talk about China). But it is a big mistake, as it will not be just a simple change of the leader.<sup>5</sup> When the USA loses its status of the leader, it will lead to the fundamental change of the whole structure of the world economic and political order, as the USA concentrates too many aspects of the leadership. It means that the USA's position in the World-System will remain the same since no other country is able to concentrate as many leader's functions simultaneously. And that is why (as well as considering many other reasons) when the USA loses the leadership position, it means a deep and rather difficult and critical transformation of the World-System itself, when even the nearest consequences are quite unclear (for more details see Grinin 2009, 2011, 2013; Grinin and Korotayev 2010b, 2014a, 2015). That is why it is necessary to analyze the whole range of consequences.

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<sup>5</sup> About the Chinese economic, environmental and population problems, which can prevent its further economic expansion see Grinin 2011, 2013; Grinin, Tsirel, and Korotayev 2014. We should note that despite the enormous progress, China still lags behind not only the USA, but also Russia (*e.g.*, the PRC space program has been largely 'copied' from the Soviet one) in the most advanced technological areas, as well as in the military sphere. China's falling into Growth Slowdowns and the Middle-Income Trap is also evident. And the way out could be delayed since their causes are fundamental and hard to overcome for any country of the geopolitical Onshore, including all of the BRICS countries.

Thus, according to some analysts, the unipolar period is close to its end today. However, it has not yet been replaced by a new global order, since there are multiple opposing principles that operate in the world today and thus, it looks more like a disorder (Le Monde 2008). This disorder is supported by the activities of many, if not all global players, but in recent years a considerable disorder has been particularly caused by the US actions, which is not surprising. On the one hand, the USA declines without being substituted by any equivalent leader. Moreover, there is an ever-growing number of supporters of reducing the US presence in the world in the very United States (see Bremmer 2015; Heuvel 2015). On the other hand, the United States still has power which allows preserving its position in the world. However, the hegemon's clumsy actions evoke opposition in many countries worldwide. On the whole, the decline of the US leading positions together with the attempts of a number of states to change the global rules (*e.g.*, in relation to the dollar's status, *etc.*), as well as America's absolute unwillingness to concede any of its informal prerogatives, increase tensions in the world.

## **The Prolegomena to the Outlines of the New World Order**

### **The Need for a New Order, Problems of the Transition Period and the Balance of Power**

Our assumptions about the principles of a new world order are based on the following findings. First, no hegemon has the same range of leadership benefits as the United States to replace it today (for more details see Grinin 2011, 2012a, 2012b). Second, the weakening of the US leadership is inevitable and becomes more and more noticeable. However, the US will preserve a number of advantages for a long time (see *e.g.*, Bremmer 2015; Zakaria 2008). Third, the world is to some extent interested in the American soft leadership but without dictatorial ambitions to undermine the opponents' power. Fourth, the transition to a new world order requires a random search for forms, principles, and conditions to create precedents and the desired combinations. Therefore, it will be a long and difficult search. Fifth, the transition to the new world order will temporarily increase turbulence and strife, as well as the lack of stability and struggle between different patterns of the new order.

Thus, today there are ever clearly visible trends towards the fact that the new world order will be different, it will be the world without hegemon but with some centers of power and influence, among which the United States is likely to be the most important. But it can only claim the title of the 'first among equals', rather than the title of superpower and hegemon (NIC 2008). Accordingly, one can suggest the following two scenarios of the US withdrawal: 1) meaningful and the most profitable path of a new world order in the long-term with maximum possible preservation of its influence, but not a dictate; and

2) a bitter struggle of the United States to maintain the status quo, including various actions to undermine and weaken the opponents. This will inevitably create permanent tension and strife. Meanwhile, the United States seems to choose the second pattern (although a big delay of another economic crisis could make them resort to the first one). But even when following the second path the United States will be increasingly forced to seek new alliances and allies.<sup>6</sup> Anyway, it is the struggle for the American hegemony and its position in relation to the large and fast-growing countries that keep the main intrigue of the contemporary global contradiction.

Why is the increasing ‘disorder’ more probable, if not inevitable, than a smooth transition? First of all, a move towards a new order requires common wisdom and compromise, but this is particularly so with the United States. But the political elite have always lacked wisdom. However, there are also deeper reasons. The revolutionary change in the global balance of economic power which we mentioned above (see Fig. 1) creates objective conditions for the revision of the existing world order. However, it does not entail an automatic change in military and political balances. Figuratively speaking, this requires pulling the political component of global change (political globalization) to the economic one (for definitions and paradigms of globalization, see Andreev, Ilyin, and Zinkina 2015a). Obviously, the latter is far ahead of the former. And further development would be difficult without such pulling. Yet, the narrowing of the gap between economic and political globalization is inevitable and we denote this process as a reconfiguration of the World System (see Grinin 2013; Grinin and Korotayev 2012).

The major vectors of this reconfiguration include weakening of the former core of the World System (the USA and the West), and simultaneous strengthening of the positions of a number of peripheral countries and generally increasing role of the developing countries. However, one should bear in mind that the ‘catching up’ (between the political and economic components of globalization) will also bring severe political and geopolitical crises in different

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<sup>6</sup> In October 2015, the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact was announced. Also, the negotiations are going on with respect to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA). Their implementation (although the recent signing of two agreements, as well as the ratification and operation of the former remain rather doubtful) will mean significant changes and aggravation of economic struggle. After all, all these economic alliances combined can represent two-thirds of the world GDP (at face value). Thus, the United States put at stake their domination in major economic associations. However, we agree with some observers (*e.g.*, Hedges 2015) that these agreements would be more profitable for the American TNCs than for the US economy in general. On the contrary, the latter may weaken due to the expanded import and further transfer of the US production abroad. However, due to election of Donald Trump as US President, the USA will probably withdraw from this agreement. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that there could be agreement on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA).



regions. Elsewhere we have considered the crises and turmoils in the Middle East after 2010, as well as the Ukrainian crisis as both ‘reconfiguring’ and geopolitical crises which require transformations in the world order. At the same time, grave and probably unexpected crises in other societies or regions seem rather possible. The abruptness may be akin to earthquakes. And if to continue the geological metaphor, one should note that just like the tectonic shifts occur under the most mobile Earth’s crust and at the boundaries of tectonic plates, the reconfiguring crises occur in the least stable regions and societies which are situated at the junction of geopolitical ‘plates’. Both the Middle East and the Ukraine are the regions of this kind.<sup>7</sup>

We also argue that stability or instability of the world order depends on the stable or mobile character of the balance of power. The current balance of power obviously undergoes some transformations. If the idea of the weakening United State is right, what would be the shift towards a new balance? We assume that one of probable scenarios is the creation of various alliances between countries to strengthen their positions and increase opportunities. As we have seen, this process has even involved the United States, who is usually reluctant in taking over different commitments. Thus, the search for a new balance of power has already started and it will be manifested in a more active creation of various alliances and coalitions of countries and their associations. We denote this process as an epoch of new coalitions (Grinin 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2013; Grinin and Korotayev 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014a, 2015; Grinin, Ilyin, and Andreev 2016).

One can find similar ideas in some other analysts’ works (*e.g.*, Bremmer 2015). Thus, for example, Michael Klare suggests quite a pragmatic scenario. In his opinion, one should accept the obvious facts on the ground that the United States shares the planet with other major powers: none matches the power of the United States, and is weak enough to be intimidated by the threat of the US military intervention. Having taken a more realistic assessment of the US opportunities, Washington should focus on how to co-exist with such powers as Russia, Iran and China, and how to settle the differences with them without increasing tension (Klare 2015).

### **The Epoch of New Coalitions and the Outlines of the New World Order**

Thus, the search for a new balance has brought us to the period which we call *the epoch of new coalitions*. The alliances can emerge accidentally and due to

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<sup>7</sup> The societies found to be at the intersection are situated in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Western China (Tibet and Xiang Jiang), West Africa (at the intersection of Islamic and Tropical Africa), and in some regions of South America. These regions are quite unstable, with already manifested occasional or possible signs of a crisis (but this does not necessarily mean that it will take place).

unexpected reasons which can be exemplified by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). First introduced in 2001 by an American analyst Jim O'Neil as an appropriate acronym, BRICS has become quite a real, dynamic, and multilinear alliance during the last six years.

The Earth has become rather tightly connected for cooperation even at a distance. Therefore, there appear different geopolitical fantasies, some of which are likely to come true as it happened with BRICS. However, the flexibility of partnerships within the World-System framework will probably increase for some time, but some of the emerging alliances and coalitions can turn chimeric, ephemeral or fantastic.

The above-mentioned coming turbulence together with the formation of different alliances and combinations may last for some time. But along with probable increase of conflicts and political transformations in different regions there will increase the vector aimed at the formation of common frame for the states' interests. I hope that after a certain period of 'the game without rules' (during one or two decades) the global arena will nevertheless be considered as a common field of interests with acceptable and profitable rules of the game for everyone to follow. The completed catching up of the political component of globalization can create a trend when more and more states will start to develop their policy with the account of global interests.

Certainly, the above-mentioned ideas can seem utopian especially because of the self-centered approaches and double standards that have recently intensified. But probably this shows that the world is in the search for the foundations of a new world order. Probably, this will require passing through certain cataclysms (*e.g.*, new economic crisis) since just the critical events bring dramatic changes.

The search for the most stable, advantageous and appropriate supranational organizational forms can bring to life different and rapidly changing intermediate forms, while the players at the global and regional stages will search for more effective and convenient coalitions and agreements. But finally, some of the new alliances and coalitions will transform from temporary into permanent ones and become effective supranational forms. During this process some new norms of international law will be developed whose necessity has already been much spoken about for some decades.

Thus, the foundations of the future world order must undergo certain transformations. Besides, the countries that continue to roughly and selfishly defend their national interests will lose in the final count. The largest states' policy aimed at their forceful global and regional dominance (including the most independent and selfish sovereign – the USA) will also undergo radical changes. The national selfishness will hardly disappear; however, any international action should be both relevant and ideologically justified. That is why there is a hope and perception that the concept of foreign policy will change and there will gradually increase the claims for common (regional, world, and group)

well-being; yet, the formulations like ‘the best representative of the world interests’ can often conceal selfish goals. But anyway such transformation will lead to significant and mostly positive changes.

The new world order will call for: 1) a rather solid balance of power and interests; 2) new models of the supranational government and coordination of the global processes; and 3) new ideologies. To solve the first task one should recognize the principle of pluralism of political regimes when any regime (including the democratic one) has its advantages and drawbacks. The refusal from imposing democracy at all accounts can become a crucial constituent in creating a common frame of interests and rules. To solve the second task one should reject the idea of the universal democracy at all levels. The European Union's experience has shown that at the supranational scale the democratic procedures work rather improperly. Thus, one needs a comprehensive search for new patterns which would lack an ideological bias. Perhaps, here one could employ international expert organizations co-opted by different countries and coalitions as well as a certain quota system for them at the international level. As for universal ideology, it seems it can emerge only on the basis of the search for new cooperation patterns.

Thus, although we anticipate rather turbulent times of an emerging balance between different countries and coalitions, the humanity will have rather good chances to use globalization to create the foundations of the new world order.

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