

Political Globalistics¹

Leonid E. Grinin and Andrey V. Korotayev

The globalizing world needs more and more the globalizing social knowledge. That is why we experience such an acute deficit in productive metaconcepts and macromethods that could make it possible for us to study the development of both politics and suprapolitical systems in the global temporal and spatial perspective, that would provide us with a reliable methodology of the connection between the micro- and macrolevels, between the local and the global, with an instrument allowing to compare political systems in an objective way using various parameters, to detect macrotrends within the enormous historical diversity, to identify causal hierarchies affecting processes of political globalization, and so on.

In recent years Political Globalistics in Russia has been developing within a number of important dimensions. The world-system perspective was among them.

Fig. 1. Covers of some Russian books devoted to the World System development



The notion of the ‘world-system’ can be defined as a maximum set of human societies that has systemic characteristics, a maximum set of societies that are significantly connected among themselves in direct and indirect ways. It is important that there are no significant contacts and interactions beyond borders of this set, that is there are no significant contacts and interactions between societies belonging to the given world-system and societies belonging to the other world-systems.

Within this framework ‘world-system’ can be characterized as a supersystem that unites many systems of lower orders, such as states, stateless societies, various social, spatial-cultural, and political entities – civilizations, alliances, confederations, *etc.* In general, the larger the size and internal diversity of a social system is, the more internal links it has, the more complex those links are, and (*ceterum paribus*) the higher the speed

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of its development is. Due to this we observe different speeds of development in societies belonging to world-systems and isolates, in the main ('central', Afroeurasian) world-system and peripheral (e.g., American) world-systems (prior to their incorporation into the World System).

Fig. 2. The Afroeurasian world-system in the 11th century CE



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_route.jpg.

A formal criterion that allows us to regard the Afroeurasian world-system as the World System is the point that throughout its whole history this world-system encompassed more territory and population than any other contemporary world-system; what is more, for the last few millennia it encompassed more than a half of the world population and this appears to be a sufficient criterion permitting to denote this world-system as the World System. Another point that appears of no less importance is that the modern World System that actually encompasses the whole world was formed as a result of the expansion of that very system which is denoted as the World System (and that up to the late 15th century was identical with the Afroeurasian world-system).

Today it is clear that it is very productive to search for the origins of political globalization in the depths of history. It is no coincidence at all that the growing interest in globalization has promoted interest in the trend often denoted as 'historical dimension of globalization'. Russian analysts of political Globalistics have demonstrated that the start of globalization may be connected with the early phases of the Agrarian Revolution, when one could observe the Afroeurasian world-system (= the World System) expansion and the formation of rather effective informational, cultural, and even trade links between its parts. They have also found out that for the period of the World System formation the most important role was played by information links (and especially by the diffusion of innovations). The presence of the pan-World System information network secured the diffusion of innovations throughout it. In general, the processes of innovation generation and diffusion played an immensely important role during the whole history of the World

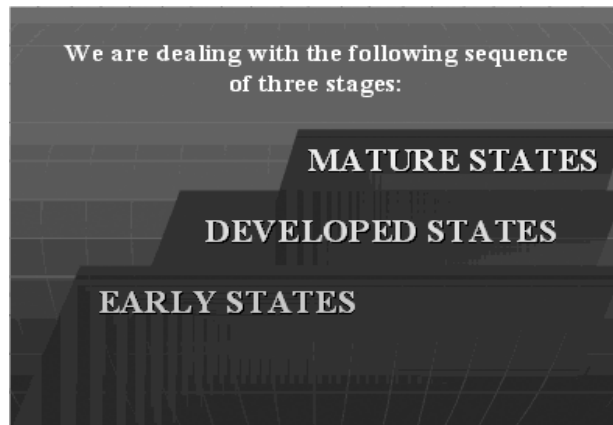
System. The world-system approach makes it possible to see that the roots of what is called Geopolitics now are hidden deep in history. For example, the start of the modern global cycles of political hegemony may be traced at least to the 2nd millennium BCE (*i.e.* to the hegemonic struggles between Assyria, Mitanni, the Hittite Empire, Egypt, and other Near Eastern states). This hegemony struggle in the 2nd millennium BCE World System core moved to a new level with the clash between the New Kingdom of Egypt and the Hittite Empire.

Fig. 3. The maximum extent of the Hittite Empire ca. 1300 BC (grey), bordering on the Egyptian Empire (light grey). The Hittite Old Kingdom is shown in darker grey

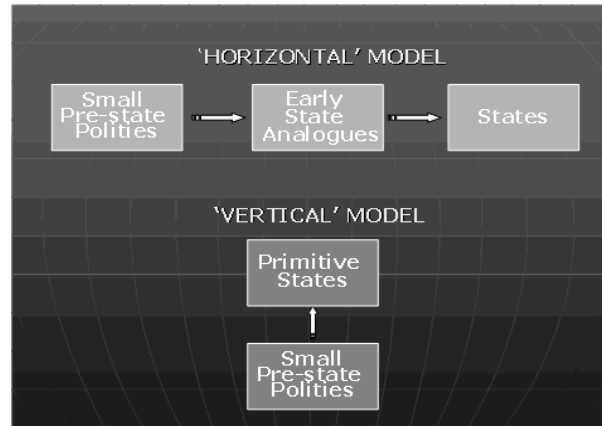


Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hittite_Empire.png.

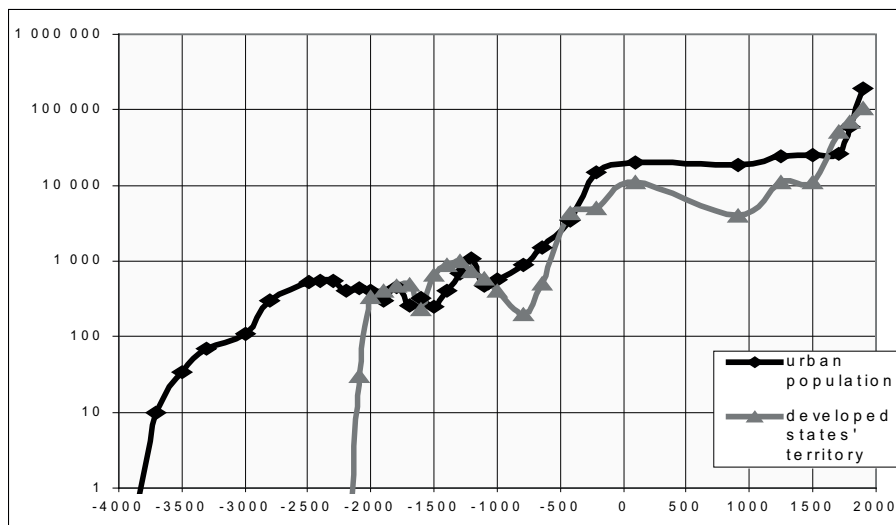
Russian political Globalistics analysts have found out that there is a rather tight correlation between the start of the epoch of the ancient World System hegemonic struggles and the transition to a new evolutionary level of the statehood – to the developed statehood. These Russian analysts have described the total process of genesis and transformation of the world political structures. They have developed a three-stage model of the macroevolution of the World System statehood (early – developed – mature state) that describes the main features of political macroevolution better than the two-stage model proposed by Claessen and Skalník (early – mature state).

Fig. 4. The 3-phase model of the global political development

This model has been used as a basis for the analysis of changes in the global development of political structures from the pre-state polities and the most primitive early states (and their analogues) till the modern supercomplex states. The power emerges together with human society. However, the political power was institutionalized within human societies much later. In the hunter-gatherer societies this institutionalization was still absent. Only with the emergence of agriculture during the very prolonged late archaic and early civilization periods one could observe the separation of political sphere from society including the beginning of specialization in the field of political management which in fact can be considered as the origin of politogenesis. The first medium complexity polities (chiefdoms and their analogues) emerged. The transition to statehood appears to be one of the most crucial changes in the human historical development. Russian political Globalistics analysts present a new approach to the causes and models of the emergence of the state. The matter is that within the politogenesis process in addition to the state formation one could also observe the formation of polities which were comparable with the early state in their complexity level and performed functions, but still lacked a number of early states attributes. Such polities are denoted as early state analogues. Thus, Russian analysts describe two models of state formation at global scale: 'vertical' (when the state emerges from pristine pre-state polities) and 'horizontal' (when the state emerges from an early state analogue which is equal to the state with respect to its volume and functions).

Fig. 5. Two main models of the state formation process

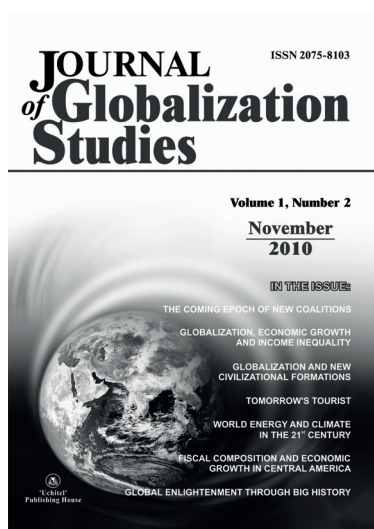
The following global political evolution is connected with the above-mentioned sequence: early – developed – mature states. Early states are insufficiently centralized states with underdeveloped bureaucracy, their flourishing took place in the period of Ancient World history and the most part of the Middle Ages. The developed states are centralized estate-corporative and bureaucratic states of the Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age. The mature states are the states of the industrial epoch with rational type of law and government where the classes of industrial society and modern type of nation have formed. Russian global analysts ascertain the strong correlation between global trends of political, historical and other global trends (technological, demographic, urbanization, *etc.*).

Fig. 6. Dynamics of world urban population (thousands) and the size of the territory controlled by the developed and mature states (thousands km²), till 1900 CE (logarithmic scale)

A very important conclusion has been made by Russian analysts with respect to modern transformations of statehood. They found out that when in the 1950s and 1960s the USA and a number of European states started their transformation into welfare states / mass consumption societies this implied the process of changing the mature class state into the mature *social* state. Later, when in the 1980s and 1990s globalization became much stronger, the mature social state began to develop into something different.

This leads Russian analysts to an analysis of interesting problem tightly connected with the globalization issue: why states lose their sovereignty and why they voluntary renounce their sovereign prerogatives.

Fig. 7. An issue of 'Journal of Globalization Studies' with a discussion of the 'globalization and state sovereignty' problem

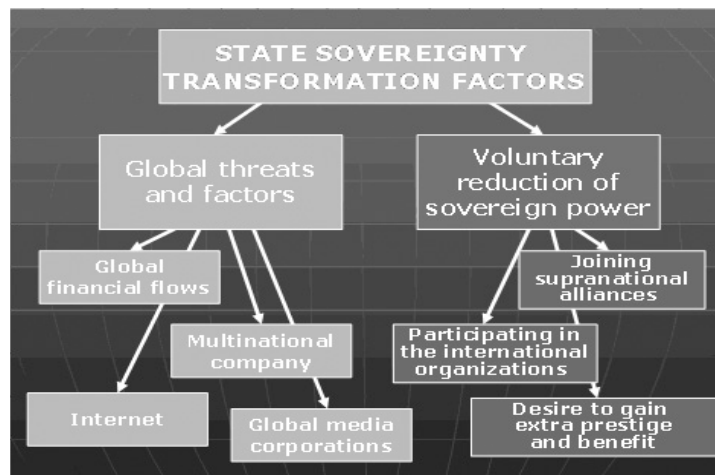


The process of globalization undoubtedly contributes to the change and reduction of the scope of state sovereign powers. Much has been said about the ways globalization strengthens the factors that objectively weaken the countries' sovereignty. The list of threats to state sovereignty often includes global financial flows, multinational corporations, global media empires, the Internet, *etc.* and, of course, international interventions, as we have recently seen in Libya. At the same time (note that this point is debated surprisingly little and occasionally), since the end of World War II, increasingly more states have been willingly and consciously limiting their sovereign rights, including the rights: to determine the size of taxes and duties, to emit money, the right of supreme jurisdiction, the right to use capital punishment, to proclaim certain political freedoms or to limit them, to establish fundamental election rules, *etc.* So there is no doubt that today the completely free and independent countries' sovereignty has become much smaller. And what is extremely important, many countries quite often give away a part of their sovereign powers voluntarily indeed. In the opinion of Russian analysts, the factor of voluntariness in reducing one's own authority is, no doubt, the most important one in understanding the future of the state.

What stands behind voluntary self-limitation of sovereignty prerogatives? There are several reasons for such voluntariness and ‘altruism’, including the fact that such a restriction becomes profitable, as in return the countries expect to gain quite real advantages especially as members of regional and interregional unions. Besides, the world public opinion must be pointed out as an important cause of sovereignty reduction: the wider is the circle of countries voluntarily limiting their sovereignty, the more inferior appear those states, which do not make such restrictions.

However, it is worth noting that the voluntary reduction of sovereignty is more characteristic of Western countries. The transformation of sovereignty in countries with different cultural traditions proceeds with more difficulty and also is closely connected with the level of economic development. *Nevertheless, the transformation of sovereignty proceeds in this or that way almost in all countries.*

Fig. 8. State sovereignty transformation factors

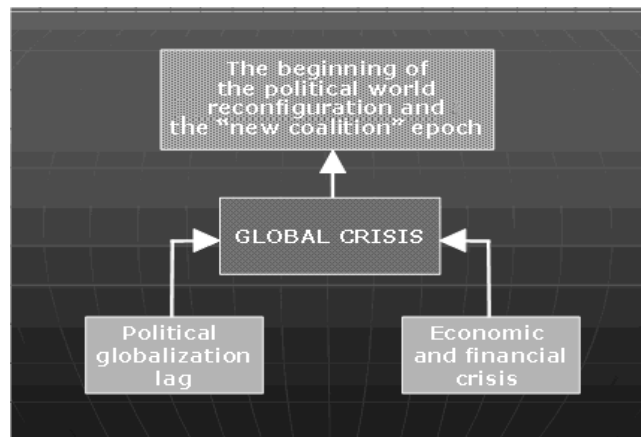


Much attention has been also devoted by Russian political scientists to the analysis of probable future political transformations in relation to the modern financial-economic crisis and the forecasts of socioeconomic and political development of the world in the forthcoming decades.

Within the framework of the analyses of the World System future development Russian political Globalistics analysts attempt to answer the following questions: What are the implications of the economic weakening of the USA as the World System center? Will the future World System have a leader? Will it experience a global governance deficit? Will the world fragmentation increase? They analyze some crucial events of the present, which could be regarded as precursors of forthcoming fundamental changes. They analyze some crucial events of the present, which could be regarded as precursors of forthcoming fundamental changes (see below). They also consider some global scenarios of the World System's near future. During the struggle for a place in organizing and operating the new world order, an *epoch of new coalitions* will come, which will outline the contours of a new political landscape for a considerably long period. Probably, for some time the mobility of partnerships within the World System will increase, the arising coalitions may

turn out to be chimerical, ephemeral, or fantastic. In the course of search for most stable, advantageous, and adequate organizational supranational forms various and even rapidly changing intermediary forms may occur, where the players of the world and regional political arenas will search for most advantageous and convenient blocks and agreements. However, some of new unions and associations may eventually turn from temporary into constant ones and take specific supranational forms. So a new world order gradually will be established. These will be such changes that could prepare the world to the transition to a new phase of globalization (it will be a great success if this is the phase of sustainable globalization) whose contours are not clear yet.

Fig. 9. Global crisis and global political transformations



The turbulent events of late 2010 and 2011 in the Arab World confirm that the world will encounter very serious changes in the forthcoming decades.

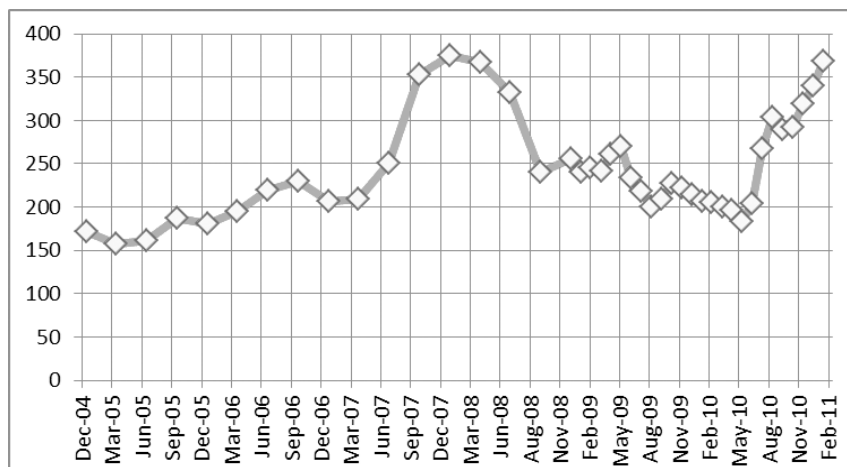
Fig. 10. The 'Day of Revolt' on 25 January 2011 in Cairo



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Day_of_Anger_marchers_in_street.jpg

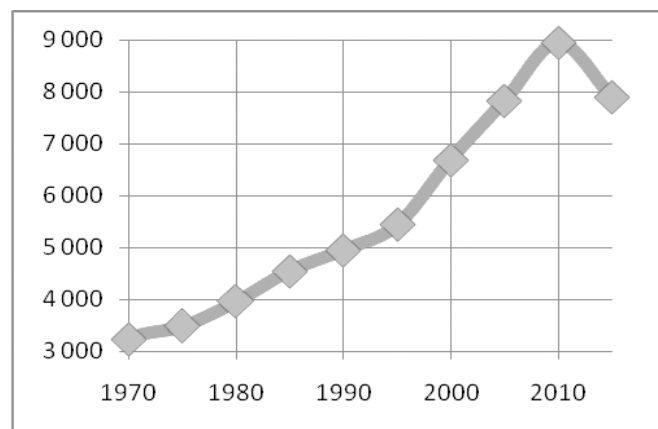
Forms of their realization may be rather different – ranging from slow and unapparent to sharp and sudden. When considering the Arab revolutions, one may indicate a whole set of their factors – both objective and subjective, local and global, logical and random. On the one hand, it is clear that a certain role has been played here by the global crisis. Note, that it contributed significantly to the synchronization of political upheavals in different countries. A special role here was played by ‘agflation’ (a global steep rise of the agricultural commodity prices [see Fig. 9]):

Fig. 11. World wheat prices, \$/ton, 2005–2011



An especially important role was played by the high proportion of the youth in the population (the so-called ‘youth bulge’) and a sharp growth of the young population in recent years. Consider, for example, the dynamics of the number of Egyptians aged 20–24 in recent years (see Fig. 12):

Fig. 12. The Number of Egyptian youths aged 20–24, thousands, with forecast till 2015



Notwithstanding all the understandable factors (including those that have not been mentioned above), it is difficult not to notice that those factors do not appear to be sufficient to account completely for a striking synchronicity of the respective sociopolitical explosions. Note that the level of poverty in almost all the countries affected by the Arab Spring is not really high for the Third World. It is clear that we are dealing here with the effect of the revolutionary influence of some countries on some other countries (especially, the ones that are similar in their languages and cultural characteristics), which was sometimes already observed in history. For example, this effect was observed as regards 1848–1849 revolutions in Europe, national liberation revolutions in Latin America in 1825–1830, revolutions in Communist countries in Europe in 1989–1991.

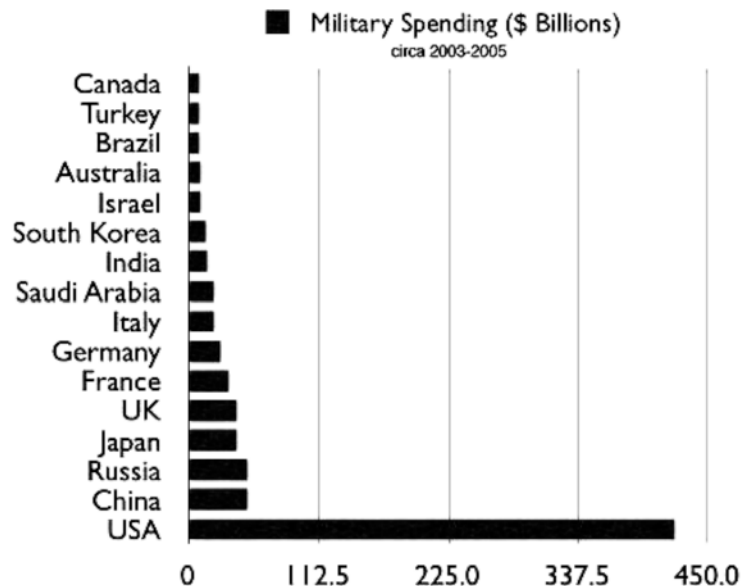
However, what is especially important is that here we are dealing with the effect of the *start of the global reconfiguration*. The respective changes will take place in various (and sometimes unexpected) forms that can involve whole sets of social systems.

Today we observe the weakening of the economic role of the USA as the World System center; in a more general sense we observe the weakening of the World System core countries as a whole. That is why there is no doubt that sooner or later (in any case in the foreseeable future) the USA's status as the World System's leader will change and its role will diminish. American analysts are worried by this more than anyone else. The current crisis is an important step toward the present leader's weakening. Russian global political scientists proceed from the idea that former priorities and foundations of the world economic order which were based on making profits for the USA will sooner or later start to transform into a new order. In the foreseeable future such a transformation will constitute collisions of relations between US national interests, on the one hand, and the general world interests, on the other.

However, such a collision will lead to very important transformations, which, unfortunately, tend to be ignored. There is a general universal tendency to believe that in the proximate future, the USA's current tenuous leading position will be occupied by the European Union, China, or some other country (from India to Russia). But to model the World System transformations mostly with regard to a change of its leader is a serious mistake. Today we are dealing not only with a crisis in the World System or even with a crisis of the World System core; rather, we are dealing with a crisis of the established model of its structure which is based on having a leader who concentrates *many aspects of leadership (political, military, financial, monetary, economic, technological, ideological, and so on)*.

One should point out that the US world leading position is unique in history. The simple change of the World System leader is rather unlikely already due to the fact that *no country will be able to occupy the position of leadership in a way that is equivalent to the one held by the USA today, as no country will be able to monopolize so many leadership functions*. Only as a result of this factor (although there is a number of other important factors), the loss of the leading role by the USA will mean a radical transformation of the World System as a whole.

Thus, according to opinions of Russian global futurologists it is evident that a place similar to the one held by the present-day USA cannot be occupied in future, neither by another state nor by an alliance of states. The functions of the World System leader can only be performed by a country that achieves dominance in ideas or ideology, an economic system and military power.

Fig. 13. US military spending in comparison with other states

However, in the foreseeable future, there will be no country (nor even an alliance of countries) that will be able to concentrate several aspects of the World System leadership.

It is often proposed that China will replace the USA as the new World System leader. Some Russian political scientists suppose that this function is not likely to be performed by China even if China eventually surpasses the USA with respect to its GDP volume. Those who suggest China as such a leader do not appear to take into consideration that its economy is not adequately innovative, that it does not develop on the basis of technologies of tomorrow (and, to some extent, even of today). In addition, the Chinese economy is too much export-oriented. The economic center of the World System cannot be based on the exporting of non-innovative (and even not sufficiently highly technological) products. Besides, the Chinese model is very resource-intensive which makes it dependent on the opportunities of extending world raw materials production and their prices. And what is more important, the economic growth in China is based to a great extent on inadequate technological basis.

In order to perform the World System center role, the Chinese economy should become, on the one hand, innovative and highly technological (which is hardly compatible with heavy industry, or conveyor industries), and ecologically advanced – on the other hand. However, China does not possess necessary conditions for this.

The Chinese economy, with all its achievements, remains generally extensive and, based on the consumption of excessive numbers of various resources and funds and with respect to the attendant investment gain, will become more and more ineffective. The transition to such an economic model that is focused on internal consumption and technological innovation is further complicated by the following points: a) the growth of internal consumption implies the acceleration of the growth of the living standards and Chinese labor costs (that are growing anyway); b) the growth of the labor costs is not likely to be compensated

by an adequate increase in labor productivity (as this happened before); c) consequently, the costs of exported commodities may increase, their competitiveness may fall, while the attractiveness of investments in China will then decrease. Some Russian global analysts believe that it will be impossible to reconstruct the Chinese development model and GDP growth rates will slow down soon. As a result, the same processes may start that were observed in Japan after 1975.

Fig. 14. Shanghai World Financial Center



Fig. 15. Dismantling Computers in South China



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:0352_20090626_Shanghai.jpg

In whole Russian global political scientists forecast that the nearest one or two decades will be quite turbulent. They regard the events of late 2010 and 2011 in the Arab World as a start of the global reconfiguration. They also forecast transition to the new world order through the period named by them as ‘the epoch of new coalitions’, which will outline the contours of a new political landscape for a considerably long period. These will be such changes that could prepare the world to the transition to a new phase of globalization (it will be a great success if this is the phase of sustainable globalization) whose contours are not clear yet. Thus, the future World System will not be able to possess the same structure as the current one with an equally strong center. We are on the eve of a very complex, contradictory, and long process of the formation of a new world order; the state will not disappear within it, but its features and functions will change significantly.

Selected further reading

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