

Leonid E. Grinin and Andrey V. Korotayev



**The World History
and World System Globalization
in Retrospective.
An Outline of the Afroeurasian
World-System Evolution**

TWENTIETH ANNUAL WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
GLOBAL HISTORY CENTER, CAPITAL NORMAL UNIVERSITY
Beijing, China
7-10 July 2011

Preliminary Remarks

In the present paper we analyze processes and scales of Afroeurasian societies' integration in historical retrospective, starting with the agrarian revolution. These are processes that promoted emergence and growth of the Afroeurasian world-system (AEWS). The latter should be considered as the direct precursor of the modern planetary World System.

Preliminary Remarks

The Afroeurasian world-system is the largest historical world-system. In the period of its largest expansion in the 13th – 14th centuries it encompassed almost all the societies of Europe and Asia and a part of African societies. In the 16th – 19th centuries the AEWS incorporated all the rest of the world-systems, as a result of which it was transformed into the planetary World System.

Preliminary Remarks

We investigate the historical aspect of globalization and analyze the main integration processes that have been taking place during the last several thousand years. In this respect the history of Afroeurasian world-system formation, its development and transformation into planetary World System gives large possibilities for the study of those processes.


Global History

The growing interest in globalization also promoted the interest in the study of the trend often denoted as a “historical dimension of globalization”. Among such movements it is especially worth noting so-called Global History whose heart and novelty, according to Bruce Mazlish and Akira Iriye, is history of globalization. Supporters of this movement, including those contributing to the *Journal of Global History*, try to investigate *the most important problems of global development in the long-term historical perspective, and produce diverse historical versions of globalization process.*


Global History

We agree with Bruce Mazlish, that Global History is a wider research area than World History.


We contend that in a certain sense almost the whole World History can be regarded as a history of movement toward the increase in the social systems' sizes, their integration, and globalization in general. Hereby, in history and sociology the investigation is broadening regarding the historical development of globalization processes.



However, there is a number of problems in such investigations. One of the main is that there is no theory of studying globalization history within them yet. In the same time within the framework of world-system research there is such a theory (along with a quite elaborated methodology), which has been developing since the 1960s. The basis of this theory and methodology is its systemness and coverage of wide historical and time spaces. Within world-systems a fundamental system property (**the whole is more than just a sum of its parts**) is realized.



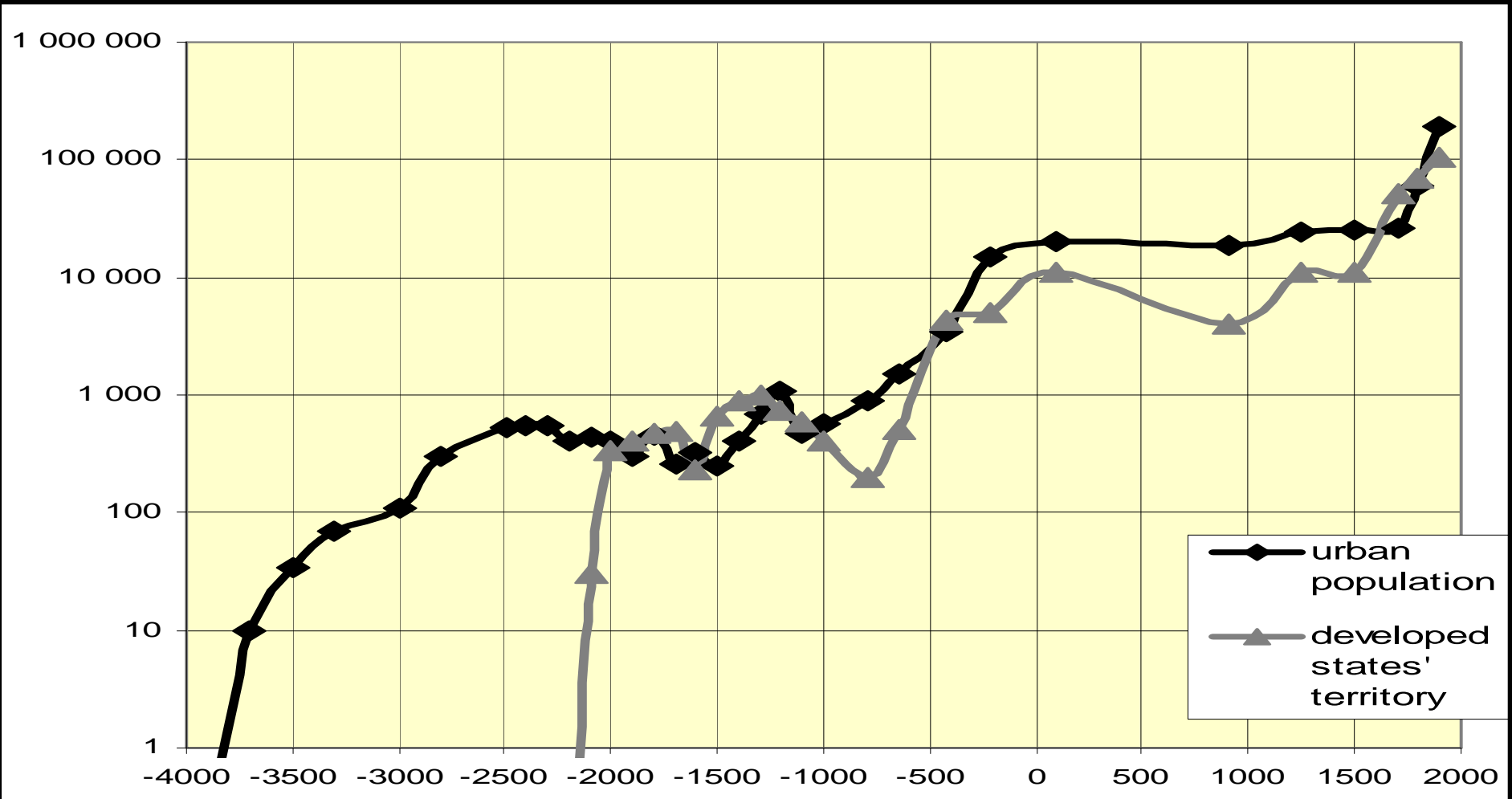
A world-system is constituted not just by intersocietal interactions but by the whole set of such interactions, whereas the level of analysis that is the most important for our understanding of social development is not the one of societies and states, but that of the world-system as a whole (Chase-Dunn and Hall).




World-system processes and transformations can be understood much better if these systemic properties are taken into account. Such systemic properties account for the synchronicity or asynchronicity of certain processes and the presence of positive and negative feedbacks that can be traced for very long periods of time.


Many processes in world-system have synchronous nature.

Diagram. Dynamics of World Urban Population (thousands) and the Size of the Territory Controlled by the Developed and Mature States and Their Analogues (thousands km²), till 1900 CE (logarithmic scale)





Changes and transformations in certain parts of a world-system can produce changes in its other parts through what may be called an *impulse transformation*. It may be manifested in various forms (producing sometimes rather unexpected consequences). Thus, the blocking of spice deliveries to Europe due to the Turkish conquests in the 15th century stimulated the search for the sea route to India round Africa, which finally changed the whole set of relationships within the AEWS.



In our paper the history of globalization is described as the process of the AEWS emergence and development. Our paper analyzes the main stages of globalization within the World System (starting from the agrarian revolution), it considers main types of global links, the driving forces and processes of historical globalization.

The notion of 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 other world-systems.

Important peculiarities of the AEWS *stemmed from its scale*

- The AEWS was a sort of *supersystem that integrated numerous subsystems*, such as states, civilizations, *etc.*
- Within the AEWS (as the largest world-system) the growth rates were the highest, as the contacts became more and more dense and evolution of individual social systems was influenced more and more by macro-evolutionary innovations diffusing throughout the AEWS.

Important peculiarities of the AEWS *stemmed from its specific geographic conditions*

- A very important role of the barbarian (especially nomadic) periphery.
- This role was connected with certain peculiarities of climate and landscape, in particular with the Eurasian Steppe Belt.
- An especially important role of water communications. Due to them, a number of communication networks with particular high levels of contact density emerged (Mediterranean, Baltic Sea, Indian Ocean networks, *etc.*).

Development of structure

- For quite a long time, the development of the AEWS proceeded to a very considerable extent through the structure transformations:

- ✦ *the integration of its periphery*

- ✦ *the transformation of peripheral societies into semiperipheral ones*

- ✦ *the transformation of a part of the semiperipheral societies into core ones*

- The movement of the AEWS to each new level of development was inevitably connected with the expansion and strengthening of communication links and networks.

The main types of the world-system spatial links

Chase-Dunn and Hall single out the following main types of the world-system spatial links:

- bulk-goods exchange,
- prestige-goods exchange,
- political-military interaction,
- Information exchange.

It is necessary to add to this list

- cultural-ideological (civilization) interaction.

Cultural-ideological interaction played a very important role within the AEWS, and its importance constantly grew. Since the 8th century CE almost all the civilized parts of the AEWS consisted of actively interacting world religion areas.

THE MAIN PHASES OF GENESIS AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE AEWS

There are many points of view regarding possible dates of the AEWS formation. We present our own version of the **six phase** periodization of the AEWS transformations.

The first phase: the 8th – 4th millennia;

The second phase: the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE;

The third phase: the 1st millennium up to 200 BCE;

The fourth phase: 200 BCE – the early 7th century CE;

The fifth phase: the 7th – 14th centuries;

The sixth phase: the 15th – 19th centuries.

THE FIRST PHASE (the 8th – 4th millennia)

Suggested designation: *the formation of contours and structure of the Middle Eastern core of the AEWS.*

Changing in size, structure and links: The beginning of the formation of rather long-distance and quite permanent information/exchange networks.

Some events of World History:

- The first stage of the agrarian revolution in the Middle East.
- The Ubaid culture emerging in Southern Mesopotamia.
- The beginning of the first phase of the Urban Revolution.

THE SECOND PHASE (the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE)

Suggested designation: *development of the AEWS centers in the Bronze Age.*

Changing in size, structure, and links: The growth of political integration of the AEWS core societies, which was a consequence of rather complex military-political and other interactions. A new world-system centers emerged in South Asia and the Far East.

Some events of World History

- Emergence and development of the first early states and civilizations.
- Writing systems, large-scale irrigation agriculture, technologies of bronze metallurgy developed.
- Hegemony struggle between the New Kingdom of Egypt and the Hittite Empire.

THE THIRD PHASE (the 1st millennium up to 200 BCE)

Suggested designation: *the AEWS as a belt of expanding empires and new civilizations.*

Changing in size, structure and links: The development of all the AEWS centers proceeded rather vigorously. The West Asian center was finally integrated with the Mediterranean world, whereas other European areas and the barbarian periphery were linked more and more actively with the AEWS centers through military, trade, and cultural links.

Some events of World History

- Emergence of new empires: the Roman Republic and the Chinese Empire.
- The first world religion – Buddhism – emerged.
- Formation of the Silk Route between the western and eastern centers of the AEWS.

THE FOURTH PHASE (200 BCE – the early 7th century CE)

Suggested designation: *the AEWS is integrated by the steppe periphery.*

Changing in size, structure and links: The periphery closed the circuit of the AEWS trade links. The AEWS expansion proceeded for a long period of time to a considerable extent through the expanding interaction between civilizations and their barbarian peripheries. The larger and more organized civilizations grew, the more active and organized their peripheries became.

Some events of World History

- Rise and demise of the Early and Late Han Empire in China.
- The emergence and wide diffusion of a new world religion, Christianity.
- Great Migrations Period and the fall of Western Roman Empire.

THE FIFTH PHASE (7th – 14th centuries)

Suggested designation: *the AEWS apogee – world religions and world trade.*

Changing in size, structure and links: the level of development of world-system links reached the upper limits of what could be achieved on an agrarian basis. One could observe the formation of important preconditions for the transformation of the AEWS into the capitalist World System.

Some events of World History

- The rise of Islam and Arab Caliphates.
- The Crusades.
- Mongolian Empire established a network of trade routes connecting effectively East Asia with Europe.

THE SIXTH PHASE (15th – 19th centuries)

Suggested designation: *transformation of the AEWS into the World System.*

Changing in size, structure and links: the start and development of the industrial revolution determined the transformation of the AEWS into the capitalist World System. The trade-capitalist core emerged in Europe, while the previous world-system centers were transformed into an exploited periphery.

Some events of World History

- The Great Geographic Discoveries.
- The fire arms' wide diffusion and military revolution in Europe and Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- The Industrial revolution in the 15th – 19th centuries.



Thank you for attention!