IV. REVIEWS AND NOTES

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Rough Waters Ahead

A Review of 'Handbook of Revolutions in the 21st Century: The New Waves of Revolutions, and the Causes and Effects of Disruptive Political Change'. Edited by Jack A. Goldstone, Leonid Grinin, and Andrey Korotayev. Springer, 2022.

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There are a variety of definitions of the term 'handbook'. All of them, however, include a reference to factual information on a specific topic or set of topics or instructions dealing with a defined process or set of processes. This generalized and synthesized explanation of what handbooks are certainly applies to *Handbook of Revolutions in the 21st Century,* edited by Jack Goldstone, Leonid Grinin, and Andrey Korotayev. However, in over one thousand pages, this handbook provides much more than the previous description implies. Not only is the concept of revolution rigorously treated and the theory of revolutions investigated in the opening section of the book, but in the remaining sections of the book, the topics of the history of revolutions, revolutionary waves, revolution in the early twenty-first century, the Arab Spring revolutions, revolutionary movements beyond the Arab Spring, and current and future revolutions are all treated clearly and in depth by a variety of scholars from a diversity of academic specializations. Further, handbooks, often didactic in the extreme, are not known for their insight and creativity; this one will be.

The introductory chapter is authored by the three editors of the Handbook and presents a description of theoretical problems facing scholars of revolution and also gives the historical basis for the analysis of revolutions; it presents non-intuitive evidence that is a harbinger of revolutionary events to come in this century. For example, it is interesting to note that both developing and developed polities experience revolutions, and that the initiation of these revolutions may result from triggers that may have seemed insignificant to the contempo-

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rary observer prior to the start of the revolution. It is further suggested that even democracies can be unstable; for example, revolutions within democratic countries, as opposed to non-democratic countries, have been by far the most frequent in the last twenty years. Up to the publication of this Handbook there have already been three separate waves of revolutions, and both recent history and conditions within the World System lead the authors to predict that the world-system itself will shortly experience a period of considerable transformation. This chapter concludes with a set of exceptionally well organized and documented tabular data on revolutions that have already occurred in the first two decades of this century; there have already been 87 of them, and yet these data are themselves incomplete (Grinin L. personal communication). Following this introductory chapter there are Handbook sections dealing with the theoretical aspects of revolutions, two on the history of revolutions and their occurrence in waves and lines, followed by a set of chapters on the revolutions of the early years of this century, including considerable attention given to the color revolutions, the Arab Spring, beyond the Arab Spring, and a summary chapter on Revolutions: Today and Tomorrow.

There is much to look forward to in the following pages of this *Handbook*, and much to be concerned about regarding the future of the world-system and that of humanity.

The historical record of waves of revolutions is given serious attention in the third section of this *Handbook*, Revolutionary Waves in History. Nikolai Rozov, in his first contribution, 'Typology and Principles of Dynamics of Revolutionary Waves in World History', identifies three factors that drive societies towards instability: demographic pressures, geo- and socio-economic factors, and the effects of historical cycles, both geopolitical and hegemonic. Types of revolutions are introduced. These include the domino effect, induction, ideological influence, military involvement, and common structural causes. Rozov further suggests that three of these wave types, the domino, induced, and polemogen types, are condensed in time, while the remaining two, ideologically driven revolutionary waves and structurally determined waves, are less well defined in time, due to the difficulty of determining the time of origin of ideologically significant ideas and the incipient structure that leads to the fully characterized revolutionary wave. He then spends time identifying criteria for the identification of each type of wave. All of this leads to a very long historical catalogue of the various types of revolutionary waves as a context for a focused analysis of such topics as Factors of Instability, Transition to Revolution, and Who Wins Revolutions, to name just three of the twelve remaining concise but informative sections of this research. This initial offering provides an excellent context for the remaining papers in this section.

Three of the four remaining papers in this section are written either by Leonid Grinin or by both Leonid and Anton Grinin, and it is to this set of papers,

all of which provide the historical context for the rest of this *Handbook*, that this review now considers. Dmitriy Karasev also makes a viable contribution in his paper on structure and agency: their effects on revolutions, both by presenting a very simple and useful model of revolutions, and by offering the insight that the phenomena of structure and agency receive less and less research attention as the complexity of the revolutionary context increases.

In the first of three papers, written either by Leonid Grinin alone or by Leonid and Anton Grinin together, revolutionary waves are described, contextualized and explained for the confines of the 19th century. The temporal delineation given by Grinin differs from those of other scholars, which he appropriately acknowledges; from his perspective, he presents the reality of the interconnectedness of the polities involved in the revolutionary waves he describes, and also describes the triggers of these revolutions. Moreover, Grinin points out that while revolutions may be inevitable, their outcomes and aftermaths are not.

[As a parenthetical note by one who indulges in the math modeling of historical processes, these three papers just reviewed, the two by Leonid Grinin and one co-authored by Leonid and Anton Grinin, are structured and present information in a way that lends itself to the application of mathematical modeling. This is particularly true of the third paper in this series by Leonid Grinin, 'On Revolutionary Waves since the 16th Century'. Certainly the identification of periods of revolutionary waves opens the door to quantitative analysis. (A simple graphical representation of these data with a very elementary weighting of each of Grinin's wave periods, reveals patterns that suggest further investigation.) However, the notion of tipping points and the fact that the patterns revealed have the potential for modeling with equations is further evidence that Grinin's writing lends itself to the modeling process. Finally, a researcher familiar with agent-based modeling, which I am not (yet), will also find this writing amenable to modeling, *e.g.* identification and analysis of tipping points comes to mind.]

In sequence with Rozov's attention to the domino effect and other effects on and of revolutionary waves, Vladislav Tsygankov further describes the significance of the domino effect. His focus is on the spatial distribution of neighboring polities and on the grouping of revolutions according to common causes; his chronology actually goes well beyond the early modern period, and he usefully compares, for example, the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions, which he suggests share a common basis. He further delineates a series of seven waves of revolution from the early 16th century through to the beginning of the 18th century.

The following chapter on revolutionary waves is summarized by Leonid Grinin, and this summary considers revolutions from the 14th century onward. There are several important factors that Grinin brings to the reader's attention: 1. Revolutions share both common cultural and external forces. 2. There are five guiding criteria by which the analysis can be directed from the recognition

of common causes to both the time interval of occurrence and the period length of the actual revolutionary wave. 3. The identification of 14 revolutionary waves from the early 16th century to the 19th century. 4. Considerable discussion is given to interpretive aspects of the origin and geography of the waves, for example an Atlantic wave as opposed to the wave of the French Revolution, and the successful slave revolution in Haiti. The author then concludes his paper with a terse note on the acceleration of the rate of revolutions in the early 21st century, terse but with a harbinger of a darkened future.

In the chapter, 'Revolutionary Waves and Lines of the 20th Century', Grinin and Grinin discuss changes in the revolutionary character from the 19th to the 20th century; they refer to the 20th century as the Age of Revolutions, and this is well documented with two appendices replete with data on the occurrence of these revolutions. While the revolutions of the 20th century have much in common with those of the previous century, including but not limited to the effects of growing inequality and against monarchies, the revolutions of this last century were often the result of a struggle for independence and the establishment of nation states. The authors list eight trends characterizing aspect of modernization that contributed to and preceded the occurrence of revolutions in the 20th century. The causes of these revolutions are then given s trenchant analysis followed by a classification of these revolutions.

The concept of lines of revolutions is introduced after a thorough treatment of what waves of revolutions are, their context and their causes. Lines of revolutions, according to the authors, are a theoretical construct in which causes are linked to different chronological frameworks, belonging to different waves but sharing '... the common character of these revolutions as well as their outcomes'; these lines of revolutions occur within a common segment of time, but within that segment occur at different times and in different places, all with similar characteristics and goals. This concept of 'lines' is quite useful in delineating the overall patterns of revolutions in the 20th century.

It is interesting that the authors identify a variety of outcomes and focuses for these revolutions of the last century. In particular, the aftermath of revolutions does not always lead to positive change, and there may in fact result an ensuing period of instability; a period of state fragility in which a 'successful revolution' may lead to the establishment of autocratic rule. The rhetoric of revolutionary movements can be weakened and then followed by the rhetoric of the strongest, often leading to a dictatorship. Grinin and Grinin's research also notes the occurrence of transformation without replacement of the government; a revolution without destructive physical rancor in which meaningful change does occur. This meaningful change occurred in the revolutionary year of 1968 in France and the U.S. India and Pakistan are noted as special cases of nations with revolutionary movements without revolutionary change.

The section 'The Arab Spring Wave as an Important Revolutionary Turning Point' opens with an assessment of the basic causes and conditions of the Arab Spring. What is unique about this section is the quantitative nature of two chapters; this uniqueness is not shared by much of historical research in general; two of the papers in this section, 'Egypt's 2011 Revolution: A Demographic Structural Analysis' and 'The Arab Spring: A Quantitative Analysis' are both mathematically oriented. The common thread in both papers is that Andrey Korotayev is a co-author in both. Korotayev is a globally recognized researcher with the ability and talent to clearly identify historical patterns and their amenability to mathematical modeling. The Color Revolutions are also given due attention as a revolutionary wave, a wave that has not met expectations with respect to overthrowing authoritarian rule and establishing more democratic government. The Rose and Orange Revolutions are given their due by Alexander Khodunov, and the Green Revolution in Iran is analyzed by Nikita Filin. It is also noted that the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia acted as a tipping point within a tipping point, as this specific revolution motivated the rest of the revolutionary cascade that is the Arab Spring.

Religion has played a unique role in promoting revolutionary change; certainly the effects of both the Protestant Reformation and its Counter-Reformation are still with us today; although the political effects of this revolutionary push-and-pull were historically more pronounced than they are now. The two examples are Iran and the ISIS.[*] Nevertheless, since the end of the 20th century onward, there has been an Islamic revival, one in which religion and politics are deeply intertwined. Nikita Filin *et al*. give special scrutiny to two examples, Iran and ISIS. Iran has survived as an autocratic theocracy for more than 40 years, supported and abetted by a strong government, a close relationship between the government and the military, and a very effective intelligence service. This combination of institutions has led to improved living conditions for the general population over that period. By comparison, ISIS is a shadow of its former self, largely as a result of very destructive policies. While Iran is currently facing significant problems in the form of religious reform – the wearing of hijabs is an outward sign of a much deeper problem – and has been hampered by burdening US-led sanctions, it is in far better shape to persist, at least in the near future, than ISIS. Ultimately, this will depend on the resilience and flexibility of Iran's political-military institutions.

However, revolutions have taken a turn towards the non-violent side of political rejection. The Otpor, founded in Serbia as a student organization promoting the non-violent approach to political protest and revolution, was responsible for supporting the color revolutions. In their paper, Nikita Filin *et al.* detail the development and influence of Otpor politics in supporting the color revolutions

[*] The terrorist organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

in Georgia, the Ukraine, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia, and Egypt. This paper explains the role of non-violence, mobilization, and humor, as well as the establishment of a network of activists, in promoting revolutionary change. A subsequent chapter by Lincoln A. Mitchell addresses the limits, in particular with respect to revolutionary continuity from polity to polity and also with respect to both world-system and local levels of complexity.

The concluding chapter, written like the Introduction by the editors of the *Handbook*, Jack Goldstone, Leonid Grinin, and Andrey Korotayev, and subtitled 'How Many Revolutions Will We See in the 21st Century', is a less sanguine capstone to this excellent collection of scholarly work on revolutions. There are those who believe that the rationality and the spread of democracy will slowly extinguish the occurrence of revolutions. However, as the editors suggest, the reality of current evidence suggests otherwise. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s opened the door to unbridled neoliberal capitalism which has driven both global and national inequality to new heights. This escalation of inequality has been aided and abetted by an economically and militarily dominant U.S., which has indulged in reckless foreign policies, along with the rapid population growth in some polities, particularly those on the periphery of the world-system, and the recession that began in 2007 and continued until 2011 and beyond. Added to these aggravating factors are the realities of global instability, the ongoing residue of COVID effects, factional democracies, and the list goes on. There is also the trend of increasing revolutions within some existing (but possibly fragile) democracies; revolutions are then currently endemic within the world-system, at least for the near future.

This final chapter then provides a catalogue of the types of possible future revolutions, ranging from those occurring as part of the transition from autocracy to democracy, to anti-monarchical revolutions, to religious revolutions, to those of national self-determination, and there are others. It is further suggested that the geography of these future revolutions will be largely restricted to the continent of Africa and the contiguous Middle East. The polities in these areas seem to share three characteristics that make them prone to revolution: rapid population growth, a high or growing degree of urbanization, and a high percentage of well-educated but unemployed youth. [As a parenthetical remark here: it will be interesting to follow the role and behavior of transnational corporations over the next few decades. Will these economic giants throw oil on rough waters of the world system or will they contribute to the 21st century morass predicted by many (most? all?) of the authors in the pages of this handbook.]

Finally, the editors do suggest the possibility of remediation of the conditions and context for potential further revolutions. This, they argue, should occur in three areas: improved education specifically for women but also for a better educated world-system population as a whole; improved birth control,

and economic and political reform. The first two areas are easier to understand functionally than the last. In fact, economic and political reform may also be at the core of the near-horizon turmoil of the 21st century that most see as a reality.

I would like now to return to the notion of women's education as a remedial issue. Education, at least in the US, has been a cultural follower, not a cultural leader, and I would not be surprised if this is probably the case globally. However, for education to be a remedial factor and ultimately a change agent, the collective mentality of the educational world must change. The following quotation suggests the tenor of such an educational change:

> None of this will work to head off the collapse predicted by *The Limits to Growth* – even with road maps, complexity development, or breakthrough technology – without a concerted effort to grow the magnanimity of the human spirit. That will require a focus on a very different set of principles in education than our current model. Focused on obedience, as well as rating and ranking our young people is a collapse of long-term vision. Young people must be raised to have agency, make decisions for themselves, and learn how to connect with others. They cannot learn how to do this with overbearing programs, constructed by academic elites, intent on elaborate systems of categorization (Pezeshki 2022).

Clearly, for education to be culturally effective with regard to being a remedial factor in reducing the possibility of future revolutions, as the editors and (hopefully) all the contributors to this *Handbook* would support, cultural ideology must change. Perhaps, within the pages of this *Handbook* the developmental strands and plans will be found to do just that, to support a cultural revolution to thwart future political and economic revolutions; to calm rough waters. It is also a professional work of scholarship and a guide to the most up-to-date understanding of past, present, and future revolutions.

Reference

Pezeshki C. 2022. How do We Grow Socially? *Limits and Beyond: 50 Years on from the Limits to Growth, What did We Learn and What's Next?* Exapt Press.