
AFRICAN DIMENSION

MODERNIZATION IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND DESTABILIZATION PROCESSES

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This article provides some characteristics of the complex modernization process in African countries, highlighting both important similarities with other modernizing countries and key features of African modernization. On the one hand, we highlight the achievements of modernization, but we also demonstrate the correlation between modernization in Africa and destabilizing processes, including separatism, revolutionary events, civil wars, and Islamist extremism. The article also examines the influence of Islamism on the characteristics of modernization in Islamic African countries. Identifying the impact of rapid modernization on destabilization processes in African countries is an important task, as it makes it possible to minimize entropy and destabilization.

Keywords: *modernization, Global North, Global South, Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, destabilization, revolution, separatism, integration.*

1. Introduction: Modernization and Destabilization

Various studies, including our own, show that modernization processes in societies, in any form, are potentially fraught with various destabilization phenomena. See, for example, the connection between modernization and only one type of destabilization – revolutions (Lipset 1959; Cutright 1963; Moore 1966; Huntington 1968; Dahl 1971; Eisenstadt 1978; Brunk *et al.* 1987; Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992; Burkhart, Lewis-Beck 1994; Londregan, Poole 1996; Epstein *et al.* 2006; Boix 2011; Goldstone 2001, 2014; Grinin 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2017a, 2017b; Bilyuga *et al.* 2016; Hobsbawm 1996; Mau and Starodubrovskaya 2001; Grinin, Korotayev 2012a, 2012b; Korotayev *et al.* 2011, 2017; Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022a; Grinin A., Grinin L. 2023).

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Destabilization is a crucial and inevitable part of socio-political and other processes that can be traced throughout human history. Destabilization and organization (which also includes an element of stabilization) are always in a dynamic unity and struggle. Periods of strengthened order alternate with periods of its weakening as a result of various destabilizing processes. At the same time, destabilization can be seen as the entropy of order in society, on the one hand, and as a tool of creative destruction, on the other (in Joseph Schumpeter words [1949]). Otherwise, any regime or any social institution would remain in perpetual stagnation. (For more information on types, causes, and the nature of destabilization, see Grinin 2023b; Grinin A., Grinin L. 2024).

In Africa, destabilization is caused by many processes, including ethnic contradictions and conflicts, civil wars, separatism, the government's inability to protect the population from crime and terrorism, which is exploited by Islamic radicals (see, *e.g.*, about Somalia Askerov et al. 2025), economic crises (as was particularly clearly demonstrated by the Arab Spring), protests against corruption, nepotism, electoral fraud, weakness and instability in a number of African societies and states, and many others (see Grinin et al. 2023; Grinin 2023a, 2023b; Grinin, Khairullin 2025). However, surprisingly, one fundamental cause of instability and destabilization – accelerated modernization of African countries – is mentioned much less frequently and gets insufficient attention.¹

Meanwhile, the period of modernization is characterized by changes in technology, as well as in many economic and social relations, which gradually (but, by historical standards, quite rapidly), transform from archaic to modern. However, during such transitional periods, crises typically arise, resulting from the inability of many traditional institutions and relationships, as well as ideologies, to keep up with changes in technologies, communications, education systems, healthcare, and demographic structures (see, *e.g.*, Shulgin et al. 2023).

All this leads to significant tensions in society, which can cause the fabric of society to break at its weak points (*e.g.*, along ethnic lines). In this regard, it is important to note that in multinational states, as a result of modernization, a phenomenon occurs when previously economically and culturally backward regions and peoples develop to a level when national consciousness begins to grow. This becomes a direct path to the struggle of such ethnic groups for political equality, autonomy, and an independent state, as well as a desire to separate from the larger state. As a result, it can be stated that most national liberation revolutions were somewhat prepared by transformations associated with modernization (see: Grinin 2022c; Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022a; Filin et al. 2022), since nationalism often results from changes in the spheres of education, communication and social relations, that is, from the processes that inevitably occur during modernization (see Gellner 1983; Grinin 2008, 2022c).

1.1. On the concept of modernization

The concept of modernization covers a wide range of issues, and its precise definition is controversial (Apter 1965; Black 1966; Levy 1966, 1967; Eisenstadt 1966, 1978; Smelser 1967; Huntington 1968; Rostow 1971; Tipps 1973; Przeworski, Limongi 1997; Poberezhnikov 2006; Travin, Margania 2004; Nefedov 2007; Grinin 2010, 2013a, 2022a; Grinin, Korotayev 2015; Yakovlev 2010; see also: Bendix 1967; Collins 1968). For the purposes of this article, we define it as follows. *Modernization is the process of society's transition from an archaic (highly complex agrarian) to an industrial level (and currently, to an industrial-informational economy [see Thomann and Pantserev*

2025]). So modernization encompasses a fairly wide range of areas: technological, economic, financial (due to the powerful development of markets), demographic (urbanization, migration, accelerated population growth in the early stages, *etc.*), social in the broad sense (changing social status, developments in medicine and education, new social relationships), cultural (increasing literacy inevitably leads to profound cultural changes), informational, administrative, political, and others. Of course, the scale and pace of change in each direction can be determined by the characteristics of these subsystems, leading to powerful imbalances (discussed below) that results in society's inability to exist in a coherent systemic form and thus experiencing deformations and stress. The driving force, however, is military modernization (which synthesizes many areas). This is the source of state activity towards modernization. Technology, the growth of markets, and commodity-money relations, energize society. Economic and medical improvements (such as a decline in mortality, especially among children), and so on, trigger irreversible demographic processes.

2. Types of Modernization and Africa

We have identified the following types of modernization:

1) *Natural-historical modernization*, which occurs without external influence, but only in those societies that are the first to initiate these processes, as was the case, for example, during the Industrial Revolution in England in the 18th and 19th centuries (see Grinin, Korotayev 2015; Grinin, Grinin, Korotayev 2024: Ch. 2). However, such societies are rare and this type obviously does not apply to Africa.

2) *Forced modernization* (imposed by an external force: from the metropolis or as a result of occupation) can be observed sometimes. This type can be illustrated by examples of Egypt during the British occupation (1882–1919 [on this period, see Daly 1998]), Japan during the American occupation (after 1945), and India during the late period of British rule. However, when it comes to forced colonial modernization, it is often not the entire complex of changes associated with modernization that is imposed, but only some aspects, and in some narrow scenarios that are necessary and beneficial for the metropolis.

For the purposes of this article, it is worth noting that a society undergoing a forced modernization often manages to avoid social explosions for a long time (although they may eventually break out, as happened in Egypt in 1919 and in India in 1942–1947, see Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022a).

3) *Catch-up modernization*. Most often, modernization of society is associated with catch-up development, accelerated industrialization, or rapid integration into the international division of labor, when existing production and socio-political systems of governance are adopted. In such a situation, on the one hand, the transformation process accelerates, but, on the other hand, many reforms necessary for stable development fail. As a result, enormous imbalances arise in society, with modernization primarily affecting the military sphere, technologies, and economy, while the distribution system and archaic political and social structures change at a much slower pace (see Grinin 2017b). Modernization gives rise to new ideas, ideologies (liberalism, democracy, socialism, nationalism, *etc.*), and demands that start to conflict with the established order and traditions.

It should also be noted that such catch-up modernization leads to cultural borrowings and, sooner or later, to the importation of revolutionary ideologies. As a result, in countries undergoing catch-up development, indigenous leaders begin to view revolutions (as they later consider democracy) as a universal and promising means of achieving a new level. Consequently, peripheral countries, which are not yet ready objectively for higher forms of development, are also drawn into the revolutionary process (see Grinin 2022b).

During modernization, rapid and uncontrolled change coupled with growing structural imbalances and demographic pressures can lead society into an emerging modernization trap. These imbalances can be also exacerbated by rapid urbanization and rising expectations that exceed society's capabilities and are particularly difficult to meet against a backdrop of growing inequality. Together, these factors increase the risk of social imbalance (see, *e.g.*, Johnson 1968; Smelser 1963; Goldstone 2014), which can lead to socio-political unrest (Grinin 2022a). Thus, the origins of different types of destabilization associated with modernization often lie in serious imbalances in societal development resulting from accelerated modernization. These imbalances transform into persistent discontent and opposition to the government, which, in turn, can develop into a crisis if power weakens or socio-political instability occurs. In short, modernization disrupts the fabric of traditional society, causing significant changes and sometimes grave consequences for entire social strata. It also increases the possibility of conflicts within society, leading to military coups, revolutions, civil and guerrilla wars, separatism, terrorism, and the like. Regarding African countries, we should add that the weakness of statehood coupled with the need for development inevitably led to the military becoming the most developed institution (of course, not relative to developed countries' armies, but relative to other institutions), and the army becoming the best organized force. Hence, the special role that military coups played in African countries during the second half of the 20th century. However, even today, they have not yet disappeared but have transformed into what is known as a coup d'état or a form of military revolution, the so called coupvolution (*e.g.*, in Sudan since 2019 [Fain 2025] and Niger in 2023, and other countries).

In many African countries, modernization began as a forced process, as the colonial powers (and their businesses) were interested in developing these countries for more productive exploitation and management. This modernization included the construction of railways and telegraph systems, some education (especially for the elite), the development of healthcare, certain mineral extraction, the construction of port infrastructure, electrical infrastructure in some places, and some enterprises, among other things. However, the level of such forced modernization varied greatly among colonies. It was more or less systematic only in the Union of South Africa, and, to a certain extent, in Egypt (as mentioned above).

The only independent power on the African continent that is noteworthy for the attempts at modernization, we can mention Emperor Haile Selassie's reforms that started from 1930 and included the abolition of slavery, construction of schools, hospitals, and roads, creation of a regular army, and so on. However, his reign ultimately ended with a revolution, as society matured somewhat and actively borrowed various foreign ideas (including socialism), and new forces and trends emerged. As for Liberia, another African country before its liberation, its history clearly demonstrates that attempts to intro-

duce democratic institutions into an undeveloped society (which is also often carried out by force or other coercive means and is a form of modernization) typically lead to reduction of these institutions to the existing level of social relations as well as to destabilization. Nevertheless, forced attempts to introduce fully-fledged and mature democracy into countries that are unprepared for it continue, which is one of the main causes of destabilization in Africa today. Even Egypt, where forms of democracy have been developing since 1919, clearly illustrates the difficulties of implementing democracy, especially after the revolution in 2011 (see Grinin and Korotayev 2022a, 2022b). On the other hand, such modernization undoubtedly advances countries, but at a high cost. A gradual approach to democracy would be less difficult in many cases.

Of course, in its violent colonial form, in African countries during the colonial period, it was only a part of the long and arduous journey of transforming traditional societies into modern ones. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the fact that European colonizers created with their own hands an educated and privileged African elite, which initially occupied junior civil positions in the colonial administration, and these same people later carried out national liberation revolutions on the African continent (see Davidson 1994; Sledzevsky 1988; Zabolotskikh 2010). This aptly illustrates the close connection between modernization and destabilization, even if it is not complete. It is also worth noting that it was precisely advanced African societies with forced modernization, particularly Algeria, that experienced the most radical revolutionary upsurges and brutal national liberation struggles.

In general, catch-up modernization has taken place and continues in African countries. However, the fact that modernization began as a forced process in many countries gives a special character to this catch-up process. This is evident, firstly, in the fact that a number of countries have already established specialization, including in the form of a monoculture,² which is difficult to break, as this product that provides the most important export income, without which modernization is impossible. Secondly, many countries gravitate toward the influence, markets, capital, and other resources of their former metropolises. Thirdly, established borders, as well as certain institutions, established communication routes, and other factors, significantly influence the direction of modernization pathways. Fourthly, official and educational languages of the former metropolises (English, French, and Portuguese), also influence the choice of partners and priorities. In our view, the spread of world languages in African countries contributes greatly to modernization both in education and in capital inflows and other areas, but it also influences the choice of countries of study, capital importers, *etc.*

3. African Modernization: Accelerated and Expanded Modernization under Complicated Circumstances

Modernization in African countries can be described not just as accelerated, but as expanded. What is expanded modernization? We mean that virtually every sphere and sub-sphere of life and public administration is modernized, so the modernization front is exceptionally broad (see above). Therefore, the acceleration of modernization must be multiplied by the number of spheres being modernized. Of course, the rate of development and change in different spheres vary considerably and thus greatly increase the disparities. In addition, the exceptionally rapid growth of technology and the scope and complexity of the tasks become even more complex. We have written extensively about

the powerful impact of new technologies on all other spheres of life, transforming, stimulating, or, conversely, distorting them (Grinin 2006a; Grinin, Grinin 2015; Grinin, Grinin, Korotayev 2024). Given that African countries face the need to implement information technologies not only of the fourth technological paradigm, but also of the fifth, and even sixth ones, the impact of these technologies on traditional ways of life has become enormous.

Throughout their independence, African countries have faced and continue to face the need to catch up with Western countries in virtually all technological paradigms/ modes, starting from the first one (*i.e.*, simple mechanization), to the creation of transport infrastructure and heavy industry (*i.e.*, the second paradigm), to electric power, chemistry *etc.* (*i.e.*, the third paradigm), and to introduction of electronic and modern information technology (the fourth technological paradigm), and ICT (the fifth technological paradigm). Moreover, they have faced and continue to face the task of simultaneous implementation of several technological paradigms. Currently, we can speak not only about the need for but also about the beginning of a new direction in modernization associated with the implementation of AI, cryptocurrencies, bio and other technologies of the the sixth technological paradigm. By the way, it should be added that, paradoxically, due to underdevelopment of their banking systems, African countries are among the world leaders in the spread of cryptocurrency payments. So this gives an idea of the enormous unevenness in the development of various spheres of life in Africa.

3.1. Accelerated modernization combined with an exceptional level of backwardness

Accelerated modernization of independent states took place in a number of countries at different times (of course, the speed of change corresponded to the general pace of historical change in the corresponding period; this trend accelerated in general). Modernization of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and early 16th centuries brought this empire on a par with European powers in a number of respects (*e.g.*, Ivanov and Oreshkova 2000; Findley 1989) and, what is significant for our topic, influenced the development of North Africa. In Africa, the modernization of Egypt during the reign of Muhammad Ali and after was almost the only example of a successful and independent African country (for more details, see Grinin 2006b; Grinin and Korotayev 2009a). The modernization of Japan after the Meiji Revolution in 1868, as well as Germany after the revolution of 1848, especially after Bismarck's rise to power, is also impressive (see Grinin 2016). Russian history can provide a number of examples, as Russia always lagged behind the West and always strived to catch up, so in the Russian history one can count many stages of modernization, beginning with the time of Ivan the Terrible.

However, if we analyze all these cases, we find that none of them lagged behind the advanced countries to the same extent as the vast majority of African countries lagged behind European countries and the United States.³ It is no coincidence that, in connection with attempts to direct a number of African countries towards the socialist path of development, the USSR revived the idea of bypassing historical stages on the road to socialism.

3.2. Accelerated modernization in a situation of weak statehood and immature ethnicity

If we continue to analyze the above-mentioned cases, it is crucial to note that we do not find instances of such weak statehood as was and still is the case in many African countries. On the contrary, statehood traditions have been more or less strong in every mod-

ernised country. Today, only a few countries could be compared to some African countries, such as Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and others in terms of statehood development, these are perhaps only Afghanistan or Yemen, which have failed to modernize and are in a state of profound destabilization. The same applies to immature ethnicity. Tribalism outside of Africa exists globally only in the countries listed above and in some provinces within certain countries, such as Balochistan in Pakistan and Iran. However, it is crucial that tribalism in African countries has the status of a crucial institution and a factor influencing all major spheres of life. Of course, tribalism also modernizes, adapting to change and development. Therefore, one could say that it has in a state of severe overmaturity for a long time, analogous to normal national relations in other countries. However, this process of the development of political tribal nations (ethnicities) into political state nations has an extremely serious impact on both modernization and destabilization processes. More about the role and influence of immature statehood and ethnicity on destabilization see in Grinin 2020a; Grinin *et al.* 2023).

3.3. Accelerated modernization under high demographic pressure

High demographic pressure has long been considered a critical destabilizing factor (see Goldstone 1991, 2002; Grinin 2023a, 2023b; Korotayev *et al.* 2011). We have also written extensively on this topic, particularly in relation to the growth of young cohorts, about youth traps, which we believe are a type of modernization trap (see Grinin 2012a, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2019, 2022a; see also Korotayev *et al.* 2011). The Arab Spring was a demonstration of the impact of such traps (Grinin, Korotayev 2022b).

Rapid population growth in Africa was the primary reason why the average annual per capita GDP growth was negative in 30 countries on the continent in the 1980s and in 25 countries in the 1990s (Bessonov 2010: 58). However, since the 2000s, the gradual development of economies and institutions, integration of African countries into the global market and increasing globalization have reversed this trend.

Many destabilizing events, including revolutions, are linked to demographic factors (Korotayev, Zinkina 2011; Grinin, Korotayev 2022b; Grinin 2020b). Therefore, in this article, we only briefly mention this factor, which in no way implies underestimating it. At the same time, it should be taken into account that this is a source of growing influence for African countries and a source of funding through migration (see below), and will also become increasingly noticeable in the future with remote work opportunities (Grinin A. *et al.* 2024; Grinin, Korotayev 2024a; Grinin, Grinin, Malkov, Korotayev 2024). Thus, many difficulties can also be advantages. In particular, we wrote:

With the rapid expansion of remote work opportunities, more and more Africans will become connected to economically developed countries. Involving educated African youth in the system of remote work in the global North is a decade-long project that will simultaneously alleviate the problem of labor shortages in the Western world and China, and may become one of the ways to reduce unemployment in Africa, raise the standard of living in those countries, and bring European and African cultures closer together (Grinin A. *et al.* 2023)

4. African Modernization: Other Features, Obstacles, and Opportunities; the Destabilization

4.1. General problems

Thus, even brief outlines reveal the unique nature of African modernization. This means that while relying on modernization theory, it is necessary to carefully assess the applicability of Western experts' prescriptions to African realities. It is not surprising that actual changes in the sub-Saharan region differ from prescribed paths and in many ways differ from the projects, models, and development paradigms proposed and supported from outside (Sledzevsky 2013). It simply cannot be otherwise.

On the other hand, it is important to note that African modernization also has many similarities with societies that previously followed the path of modernizing archaic societies. Below, we will attempt to summarize these similarities. It is worth emphasizing that, although these features of African modernization have been described in the literature, a) authors often point to them as specifically African; b) these features are rarely summarized; and c) not all of these features have been sufficiently covered in the literature.

Thus, this includes, in particular:

1) Traditionalism, which is preserved and reproduced not only in rural areas (the main source of traditionalism), but also on the periphery of urban economies (Bessonov 2010: 51–52). Of course, this type of traditionalism is stagnant by nature (*Ibid.*), but nevertheless, life gradually forces even the most conservative owners to change technologies and approaches.

2) Multi-sectoral economy, which inevitably emerges with modernization. Let us recall that the issue of multi-structuralism was one of the most important, both theoretically and practically, in the USSR in the 1920s.

3) Enormous disparities in development between and within countries, when modern enclaves coexist with archaic and primitive territories in terms of technology and culture, even within large cities where fashionable neighborhoods are surrounded by slums. We will discuss this further below.

4) An acute shortage of capital.

5) Over-indebtedness of countries and economies.

6) Excessive dependence on exports, which largely consists of raw materials and periodically causes crises due to sharp fluctuations in world prices.

7) Strong dependence on foreign capital.

9) Compradorism associated with serving foreign interests by local bureaucracies that are less interested in the development of their own territories.

10) Usurpation and monopolization of national natural resources and the main sources of income by certain clans and families.

11) Massive internal migration to cities, increasing urbanization, and associated intensification of social contradictions (for more details, see Grinin, Korotayev 2009b). Demographic pressure arises, associated with what we call the 'urban trap', combined with the youth trap (for more details, see Grinin 2019, 2023b).

Of course, not all previously modernizing societies faced all of these problems. For example, both the USSR (in the 1920s and 1930s) and China (until the 1990s) relied primarily on domestic resources rather than loans. Also, not every African country faced a full range of problems. In particular, the Sahel countries are still at a low stage

of urbanization and productivity growth, and some problems (in particular, No. 10) are not yet as acute.

12) However, weak statehood and difficulties with mobilizing resources are characteristic of many African countries, which, as we have emphasized, is largely specific to African modernization.

4.2. *The Influence of Islamism*

Islam is one of the two most important religions in Africa. There are at least 25 Muslim countries (i.e., almost half of the countries in Africa) in which Islam is the predominant religion or the state religion (Islam... 2023). About 45 % of the continent's population professes Islam. It is particularly widespread in the countries of North, West, and East Africa, but Southern Africa also has a large Muslim population, including migrants, which provides opportunities for radical Islamists to become active in countries such as Mozambique.

We have already examined the specific features of modernization in Islamic countries (including the Afro-Asian macrozone of instability) that determine its deviation from the classical trajectory (Grinin 2018, 2021; see also Mohiuddin 2024), they are:

1) the special role of Islamism as not just a political ideology, but a very mass one, widespread among all social strata, contributing to the unification of society and development of a number of areas (including education) necessary for modernization. From the very beginning, Islamism objectively contributed to the unique path of modernization in Islamic countries, and the Islamic Revival (since the late 1970s) can be regarded as an attempt to modernize without adopting Western values and institutions, but, on the contrary, by returning to supposedly timeless values of early Islam (Huntington 1996: 162);

2) the weakness of state structures in the Arab world is determined by a number of historical characteristics, and consequently, the weakness of nationalism as an ideology;

3) oil wealth, which provided enormous resources for a unique path of modernization (given Islamic countries' lesser financial dependence on the West), and also strengthened the position of Islamism as a mass ideology and way of life.

The first two characteristics apply almost entirely to Africa. Undoubtedly, Islamism plays a significant role in African modernization, although its role differs in different spheres. In some spheres – cultural, ideological, and social – its role is particularly significant, and modernization, for a time, fuels Islamism and its influence. However, oil wealth is less significant for African countries, although it can trigger a profound crisis in Algeria in the late 1980s. But one way or another, the entry of a number of countries into OPEC and the development of oil fields have strongly stimulated modernization in not only Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, but also in Angola, Mozambique and other countries.

Regarding point (4), the Arab-Islamic region's relative self-sufficiency primarily applies to the Gulf countries, which can modernize with sufficient labor force, while neighboring countries enjoy opportunities to receive large foreign currency inflows. As for African countries, even those where oil revenues play a significant role, Islamism is strongly restricted, the state is secular and modernization proceeds (as in Libya), primarily through state planning and often with foreign capital involvement.

In relation to the Arab-Islamic world, this has contributed to the creation of conditions for a unique path of modernization in Arab and many Islamic countries. The greater role of religious ideas in modernization explains why modernization does not

fully affect many aspects of life in these countries, progresses more slowly than in other regions, and often hides under pseudo-religious guise (*e.g.*, the increase in women's education and their role in politics, economics, and culture occurs while Islamic or neo-Islamic traditions are outwardly preserved (Grinin, Korotayev, Tausch 2019). *Thus, we can speak about a unique modernization path in Arab-Muslim countries, where state Islamism is an important factor.* But like other manifestations of the global religious revival, Islamic revival is both a consequence of modernization and an attempt to confront it (Huntington 1996: 111–112). Therefore, naturally, Islamism has by no means proven its greatest effectiveness in terms of modernization, but it nevertheless fulfills a certain function.

However, in Africa, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, as it is often the case in the periphery of various processes, Islamism is peripheral in nature and relies on its more developed centers, largely controlled from the Arab centers in the Middle East. Islamism in Africa is generally more radical than in the Middle East. Therefore, it is difficult to speak about Islamism as a factor contributing to a specific path of modernization, except, perhaps, to some extent in Sudan, where Islamism has been the state ideology for a long time (for the reasons for this, see Seregichev 2015). The spread of radical Islamism hinders modernization in many African countries. In particular, radicals terrorize the population of many countries, especially in the Sahel region (see Grinin 2020c).

Thus, Islamism in Africa cannot be considered as a special factor influencing the development of modernization; in general, it rather hinders modernization.

4.3. Disproportions, multi-structure, uneven development, and contradictions

As we discussed above, during the process of modernization, national economies and societies develop significant imbalances, which exacerbate old contradictions and tensions within society and create new ones. At the same time, most income, especially export revenues, comes from more developed industries and economic systems, while the majority of population are engaged in traditional and less productive forms of farming using outdated technologies. We discussed the multi-layered nature of the African economy. Indeed, all types of farming can be found here, from semi-nomadic pastoralism in the Sahel and hoe farming to modern farms and enclaves of the fifth technological paradigm utilizing AI.

Export development and globalization are creating developed, outward-oriented economic centers and regions in Sub-Saharan Africa. These are typically coastal regions which have better conditions for foreign economic contacts and weaker ties with the country's interior, with the exception of areas rich in natural resources with export value.⁴ These regions are largely isolated from neighboring territories that lack export potential.

Since modernization inevitably affects traditional ways of life, neo-traditionalism (Bessonov 2010) is rapidly developing – that is, the introduction of new technologies and relationships into traditional forms. However, these new relationships are naturally reduced to an old level, leading to bizarre combinations, a kind of chimeras of the old and the new, which is characteristic of transitional periods. Nevertheless, in our view, this is also a path to modernization, albeit far from a direct one. Therefore, we cannot agree with the idea that this is pseudo-modernization, which is defined as modernization in form while preserving traditional and neo-traditional content (Bessonov 2010: 57–

58). In our view, this is not pseudo-modernization, but a natural path to modernization in the face of considerable backwardness and disparities. The same applies to such vices in state administrative development as corruption, nepotism, cronyism (with a tribalist accent), and others. Their presence, unfortunately, is more the norm, and their absence is a rare exception, which does not eliminate the need to fight them.

Growing wealth in these still-poor countries triggers powerful processes of redistribution of surplus products and state budgets. In particular, with regard to taxes, local bureaucracies and 'elites', the highest-income segment of the rural population, and others may benefit from significant tax breaks. Thus, new lines of inequality emerge, which can provoke particular outrage.

In general, as we have already noted (Grinin A. L. *et al.* 2024), modern Africa is a continent with colossal contrasts, a mixture of the archaic and the modern. A distinctive feature of Africa's development is its striking unevenness. Growth zones are separated by zones of crisis, both on the continent as a whole and in large countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and others (see Lukyanov 2023). One can agree that such unevenness will persist for an indefinite period: signs of leveling or smoothing growth and development across countries, regions, industries, and population groups are still not noticeable (Maslov 2023: 8). Therefore, one can conclude that due to the inability of many traditional institutions and relationships, as well as ideologies, to keep up with changes in the economy, technology, urbanization, demography, and other rapid and uncontrolled transformations caused by modernization, there is a high probability that a structural crisis will arise.

These and many other contradictions and contrasts lead to a multitude of consequences and outcomes. Broadly speaking, two consequences can be discussed. On the one hand, the combination of archaic and modern features, active and diverse modernization processes, and other factors lead as to positive transformations as well as to destabilization, including revolutions, separatism, terrorism, coups, civil wars, and the like (for the number of only revolutionary events in Africa, see Goldstone *et al.* 2022; Grinin L., Grinin A. 2022b, 2022c). In particular, it can be predicted that in the 21st century (perhaps already in its first half), it is Africa that will be the continent with the greatest number of revolutions, conflicts, and extremist outbursts due to the fact that, as indicated above, African countries are still in the process of modernization (often in the early stages), urbanization, formation of ethno-political nations, and development of statehood.

In the light of the above, we predict that Africa will become the most turbulent continent in the World-System in the future (see, e.g., Grinin 2020b, 2022d; Grinin, Korotayev 2024b; Grinin A. *et al.* 2024). On the other hand, we believe that many African societies have a bright future ahead, and Africa as a whole will be a continent of the future with strong development and long-time growth dynamics in various aspects, including economic processes that are important for the world. These include investments related, for example, to the relocation of production, expanding opportunities for African workers to work remotely in the economies of developed countries (see above), in the extraction of natural resources, etc.

In short, Africa's development is fraught with contradictions and potential conflicts, but it also possesses powerful dynamics and potential that are already being exhausted in the Western world. Africa contributes and will continue to increasingly contribute to

the process of bringing the Third World closer to the First World – that is, to the Great Convergence (about the last see Grinin, Korotayev 2015).

4.4. Increased need for investment and shortage of domestic financial sources

The weakness of statehood in individual countries (especially in the context of failed states, which are common in Africa) naturally prevents modernization by focusing society's efforts under the state's control, as was done in the USSR and China. Moreover, significant elements of democracy in African societies, due to their very significant self-organization and self-governance, significantly hinder this process (not to mention the lack of a unifying ideology and the aforementioned weakness of the political system). All this prevents the accumulation of resources and, consequently, dramatically increases the need for investment.

It is widely recognized that Africa requires significant investment, which can only be attracted from outside, and will not be able to develop without foreign capital (e.g., Morozenskaya 2018; Fituni 2020; Tkachenko 2016, 2019, 2022; Volodina 2019; Sapuntsov 2024; Drobot 2024). The annual infrastructure investment gap in African countries in the second half of the 2010s was estimated at \$100 billion (Titli 2017). This amount has since increased.

Since this topic is actively studied, we will not dwell on it in detail. We will only add a few considerations and facts. Foreign investment plays not just an important, but in some countries, a crucial role. For example, according to Leonid Fituni (2020), about 65–68 % of GDP in Sub-Saharan African countries is generated by companies controlled by foreign capital (either directly or indirectly) through shareholding. In Nigeria, foreign private capital – primarily MNEs – already owns up to 60–70 % of total share capital in local enterprises and joint-stock companies operating in the manufacturing sector (Meniago and Lartey, 2021). In Kenya, up to 80–85 % of the total invoice value of commercial industrial output is currently generated by enterprises and production facilities owned or controlled by foreign private investment capital and international companies (Sapuntsov 2024). Such positions of foreign capital (followed by other foreign forces) can, of course, have both positive and negative impacts, increasing lobbying and corruption and becoming a source of instability. However, as we have described in detail (Grinin A. L. *et al.* 2024), this allows African countries to choose the best conditions and navigate between the forces of different powers. At the same time, developing countries such as India, Turkey, the UAE, and others are also actively engaging in the competition for Africa (for more details, see Grinin A. *et al.* 2024). According to analysts, Turkey focuses on soft power – hospitals, schools, and aid – and increases exports, relying on infrastructure sectors. The UAE has become a leading transport and currency-financial hub for Africa, strengthening its position in the strategically important gold market, among other things. The UAE has moved up to 4th place in Africa's list of trading partners, overtaking France. At the same time, both Turkey and the UAE have achieved all this without large-scale lending, which until recently was considered the main tool in the struggle for influence in Africa by world powers (see Maslov 2023: 8). On the role of the Russian Federation in Africa, see Grinin and Korotayev 2024. However, in terms of soft power this is not completely correct, of course, as Turkey as well as some other rival states, including UAE, are heavily involved in arms supplies and support for rival and warring groups, including in Libya, Sudan, and Somalia.

Much has been written about China's role in Africa's modernization (see also Grinin *et al.* 2024). Therefore, we will highlight here only one important aspect – the ideological one. Some African countries begin to consider Chinese-style modernization as acceptable in Africa. In this context, China can be seen by African states as a historical and ideological example of a country that, initially with external assistance, has achieved a successful developmental leap and subsequently escaped Western control. China, on the one hand, emphasizes that Chinese modernization can only occur under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. But on the other, it emphasizes the idea that further fruitful development of trade and economic ties with Africa presents an opportunity for China to demonstrate on a global level an example of successful rise of countries outside the development paradigm and sphere of influence of the collective West (see Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2024; also see China's Modernization of Africa 2024). In our view, this is an important point indicating the institutionalization of non-Western paths to modernization in Africa.⁵

4.5. *The Role of the African Domestic Market*

Contemporary trends and the late entry of African countries into the catch-up modernization phase have given them another advantage that many previously modernizing countries lacked. We mean the pursuit of intra-African integration (both economic and other forms – political, cultural). Firstly, the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity), which makes much effort to develop intra-African joint action and the internal African market. In this regard, it is important to note the long-term pan-African development programs. In particular, Africa has launched the Second 10-Year Plan for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union (Agenda 2063) and accelerated the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (Volkov, Konstantinova 2023) to build an ‘integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa’ (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2024).

Of course, pan-African programs do not solve all the issues of modernization, but they significantly facilitate intra-African trade, cooperation, opportunities for borrowing experience, as well as the movement of African capital and labor. Here it is worth noting that, contrary to established stereotypes, most migration in Africa is internal. As of 2020, more than half of African migrants (21 million people) lived in other African countries, while in Europe – 11 million, in Asia – 4.7 million, and in North America – 3.3 million. Moreover, almost half of migration to Europe and Asia comes from North African countries, while about 70 % of migrants from West and East Africa remain on the continent. Thus, from a geographical point of view, the directions of migration from North Africa are strikingly different from the migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa. And overall, migration outside Africa is not all that significant compared to natural population growth. About 400,000 people leave Africa annually, which is not much given the annual birth rate of 46 million and the death rate of 12 million (Sviridov 2023a: 14).

Despite the relative poverty of even the most developed African countries, migrant remittances from them account for a significant share of the inflow of funds – 19 % (19 out of 100 billion). The largest sources of funds from African migrants among African countries are: South Africa – \$2.7 billion (mainly to Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Nigeria), Côte d'Ivoire – \$0.8 billion (to Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria), Nigeria – \$1.4 billion (of which \$0.8 billion to Ghana), Cameroon – \$1.4 billion (of which \$1.3 billion go

to Cameroon) and Niger – \$1.3 billion (of which \$1.2 billion to Nigeria) (Sviridov 2023a: 18).

In addition to the Pan-African association, there are several regional associations in Africa. Not all of them are effective, but some provide a significant impetus for modernization, in particular, ECOWAS (an association of 16 West African countries). The Association of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) also have a high level of regional integration (Volkov and Konstantinova 2023: 161–162). The effectiveness of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which includes 14 countries, was previously noted. It provides for the distribution of responsibilities among member countries in specific sectors of the economy: for example, Angola is responsible for energy, Lesotho for tourism, *etc.* (*e.g.*, Kalinichenko 2010: 83; see also Kostyunina 2016). However, the effectiveness of this association has recently declined somewhat (Volkov and Konstantinova 2023).

It is important that these regional associations become the basis for a broader unification of African countries. For example, in 2015, the heads of state from COMESA, SADC, and the EAC signed an agreement on a continental free trade area as an initial stage of the African Economic Union (AEU). Overall, the African Union, founded in 2002, aims to create an economic and monetary union in Africa by 2030 based on eight integration associations (Kostyunina 2016). Of course, this path to integration will not be possible without the vast experience (and influence) of the European Union and other supranational associations. While plans may be delayed and partially implemented, they are still impressive.⁶

Thus, the **possibility of integration**, and planned and competent integration, taking into account the mistakes of predecessors and transferring of experience from European countries, is an important advantage for Africa, which arose (as often happens with those lagging behind) precisely due to the significant lag in modernization process.

Conclusion. Some Achievements and Opportunities for Modernization of African Countries

In this article, we demonstrate the connection between accelerated modernization and African modernization in general and destabilization. We highlight both the similarities between processes and problems emerging during modernization in many countries, and those arising in African countries, as well as the important features of African modernization stemming from an exceptionally large gap between current levels of development and challenges facing them, which are particularly difficult to address within the context of weak statehood. We also point out some advantages that African countries have with regard to modernization, particularly their active and planned integration. Another advantage, compared to the modernization of several countries including Japan, Germany, Italy, and others, is their abundance of mineral resources. We have written about this previously, including the vast reserves of cobalt, rare earth metals, and other minerals that are crucial for modern electronics and AI development (Grinin, Korotayev 2024a; Grinin A. *et al.* 2024; Grinin, Grinin 2026).

Here we will add the following data: Africa accounts for 30 % of the world's mineral resources, including 7 % of the world's natural gas reserves and 8 % oil reserves. In some areas, Africa's share of global resources exceeds 30 %: up to 35 % of chromium; more than 40 % of bauxite; 50 % of cobalt and manganese; 90 % of platinum group

metals. Africa accounts for approximately 17 % of the world's forests, and more than 70 % of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa depend on forests. In addition, according to some calculations, Africa accounts for 14 % of the world's arable land, but at the same time, 2/3 of unused arable land, and 10 % of renewable freshwater sources (Sviridov 2023b: 41). Here we would like to draw attention to the huge volume of unused arable land in Africa. This further confirms that there is no hunger problem in Africa due to lack of land, especially since the growth of crop yields in general does not lag behind and even outpaces population growth.

We believe that, despite enormous difficulties and numerous challenges, many African countries have good opportunities for modernization. We agree with the assertion that Africa is still primarily about potential, but we also disagree with it (Maslov 2023: 8). The growth rates of a number of African countries are significantly higher than the global average. We have shown that most of the world's fastest-growing economies are African. For example, among the 30 economies with the highest average GDP growth over five years (2018–2022), African economies accounted for two-thirds, or the majority (Grinin A. *et al.* 2024; Ventura 2023). Thus, African countries are gradually, albeit very slowly, catching up to the level of more developed ones.

Moreover, although high rates of modernization, as demonstrated in the article, increase the risks of destabilization, we believe that the pace of modernization cannot be reduced. Therefore, the only option is to create internal and external stabilizers that would strengthen the resilience of African societies to destabilization resulting from such rapid modernization (for trends that contribute to state resilience, see Korotayev *et al.* 2025). The world as a whole, and potentially the world at large, has a vested interest in a less destabilizing situation in African countries. Attempts by certain countries to destabilize African countries (e.g., the United States and Israel in Sudan) must be exposed and made public.

We have shown above that Africa's fate will gradually, but steadily, be increasingly recognized as a universal destiny, powerfully influencing the development possibilities of the World System. The resolution of the aforementioned Africa-China Forum stipulates that the further development of these relations will proceed under the motto 'Joining Efforts to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community of Shared Destiny' (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2024). Although, like any slogan, this sounds somewhat pompous, it nevertheless reflects the fact that African development trends, including those in terms of modernization, are undoubtedly an increasingly important factor for all humanity. Africa will gradually be perceived less as a distant and irrelevant periphery, and, instead, as an increasingly important continent for our overall development.

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NOTES

¹ There is another cause, which receives very little attention, but it is also fundamental and is connected with modernization – the limited historical experience of statehood among African countries (see Grinin *et al.* 2023).

² In particular, Senegal – peanuts; Ethiopia and Kenya – coffee; Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Cameroon – cocoa; Uganda – cotton; citrus fruits and olives play an important role in the countries of North Africa, *etc.*

³ Even India, after gaining independence, far surpassed most African countries in terms of culture and other areas. Perhaps, the situation in African countries is comparable only to the modernization of Mongolia in the 20th century, but Mongolia essentially experienced semi-forced modernization by the USSR.

⁴ These areas include, for example, the so-called 'Copper Belt' (or 'copper-bearing'), which includes the adjacent territories of Zambia, the DRC and Zimbabwe.

⁵ Nigeria's for 2050 refers to the Chinese model of infrastructure development and industrialization. However, national development plans in African countries often draw on other non-Western models from the BRICS countries in order to adapt their experiences to their own realities and challenges. For example, Uganda's Vision 2040 cites the successes of China, India, and Brazil in developing ICT and biotechnology, as well as creating entire knowledge-intensive industries from scratch, including aircraft manufacturing, and human development (Nikolskaya, Matveeva 2025). About the interest for the Russian model see Musieva, Chernomorchenko 2026).

⁶ Thus, as an example, we can consider the Agenda for Infrastructure Development in Africa until 2040. It aims at the construction and modernization of infrastructure in the fields of energy, ICT, transport and water supply and includes 29 projects. For example, in the energy sector, projects are to build the Kenya-Ethiopia and Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya power grids; in the transport sector – the construction of a high-speed highway in the Maghreb, sections of the Dakar-N'Djamena-Djibouti corridor, and a bridge across the river in Gambia; in the ICT sector – ICT infrastructure is being built within the framework of NEPAD, a unified ICT network for the Eastern African Union; in the field of transboundary water supply – projects in the basins of the Senegal, Nile and Niger rivers (Kostyunina 2016: 39).

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