

# THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF LAW AND POLITICS

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## COUNTER-SYSTEMIC TRENDS IN MODERN POLITICAL HISTORY

In the article E. Wallerstein's world-system methodology is supplemented by the analysis of the counter-systemic factor in world history of the late XIXs till the beginning of the XXI century. The authors dwell on the key stages of the counter-systemic development. These are a) a counter-systemic challenge embodied in the K. Marx theory; b) Lenin's attempt to make a global counter-systemic revolution; c) the Stalinist technology of constructing and global expanding of the counter-systemic structure; c) self-destruction of the socialist counter-system during Gorbachev's rule; d) the development of counter-systemic processes at the beginning of the XXI century, when China begins to play a decisive role.

The main «markers» of these processes are a) the Islamist religious-political order, b) Russia's neo-imperialistic ambitions, c) "left turn" in USA, d) the emergence of the Chinese global alternative, which embodies a new strategy, adequate to the XXI century realities. Its essence lies in the consistent «embedding» of a new world-system cluster into the existing world-system. One of the manifestations of such a new convergent strategy is the «Belt and Path project». All of these may symbolize the end of the 500-year history of the old capitalist world-system and the beginning of a new historical era.

**Keywords:** Wallerstein, world-system, counter-system, fascism, liberalism globalism, revolution, socialism, China.

**Introduction.** The provisions of the world-system methodology have become firmly established in the culture of scientific thinking at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century. Today not a single significant political and economic forecast or serious analytical note can be prepared without this methodology. And although this approach has many opponents, the names of F. Braudel E. Wallerstein, A. Frank, S. Amin, T. Dus Santos, D. Arriga and their followers are some of the most mentioned names in the world scientific community. In their works, to one degree or another, the world system is viewed as a kind of territorial-temporal continuum, which consists of many political and cultural units, but at the same time, it is subjected to uniform systemic rules.

**Methodology.** So F. Braudel wrote about the "world-economy" which enmeshes all societies, which has its own center ("super-city"). In the XIV century Venice was such a "supercity", later the center moved to Flanders (Bruges) and England (London), and from there (already in the XX century) to New York. Rather developed societies of secondary importance are being built around the center. Further is the territory of peripheral societies. At the same time, trade communications play the role of networks that link different regions and cultures into a single macroeconomic space<sup>1</sup>.

According to I. Wallerstein<sup>2</sup>, all pre-capitalist world-economies sooner or later turned into world-empires. They were pushed to this by the idea of political unification of spaces under the rule of one state.

<sup>1</sup> Бродель, Ф. (2008). *Грамматика цивилизаций*. Москва: Весь мир.

<sup>2</sup> Валлерстайн, И. (2001). *Анализ мировых систем и ситуация в современном мире*. СПб: Университетская книга.

The only exception to this rule is the European medieval world-economy, which turned not into a world-empire, but into a modern capitalist world-system.

André Gunder Frank<sup>1</sup> generally speaks of only one World-System, which arose no less than 5000 years ago, and then, through numerous cycles of expansion and consolidation, swept the whole world

**The purpose of the article.** This article has built in the mainstream of the world-system methodology. We regard it as a preliminary sketch of the hypothesis which was elaborated in the course of studying Immanuel Wallerstein works, especially such as "After Liberalism"<sup>2</sup> (2003), "Historical Capitalism. Capitalist civilization"<sup>3</sup> (2008).

Accordingly, the purpose of this work is the following. On basis of Wallerstein's world-system methodology, we propose to go further: not only to trace the metamorphoses of the classical world-system, but also to analyze the phenomenon of anti-system and counter-system alternatives, actors of the modern world order changes.

I. Wallerstein's point of view comes down to the fact that the world-system, in the form in which it was created, cannot be destroyed "from the outside", that is, from the world periphery (or semi-periphery), because this part of the world is an included part of the world-system and completely depends on its "core". The denial of the existing world system is inherent in itself, and is the result of its internal mutational changes.

Our thesis, which is based on the analysis of the latest trends in world politics, comes down to substantiating the fact that the main factor in changing of the existing world system is, first of all, external counter-system trends. They are initially generated in the core of the world-system, then alienated from it and actively assimilated by the semi-periphery and periphery. That is, the life of the world-system is largely determined by the action of the "challenge – and – response" law, formulated by A. Toynbee<sup>4</sup>.

**Discussion.** In order to substantiate this thesis, let us analyze a number of direct anti-system or counter-system actions that have appeared since the end of the XIX-th century. and operating to the present day. The first big anti-system action was the Karl Marx theory of revolution, which became a theoretical denial of capitalism and justification of alternative communist system. The "assemblage point" of the new world-system with new social relations, new power and a new state, in accordance with Marx's plans, was to become Western Europe and, above all, Germany. It was there, where the most numerous and politically organized proletariat was formed by the end of the XIX-th century.

However, Karl Marx did not manage to become a "militant terminator" of the capitalist world-system, did not manage to move from "weapon of criticism" to the "criticism by weapon" (as he himself liked to express). Nevertheless, he formulated the principles of how the existing world-system should be reorganized, and he took the first steps towards its practical reorganization. He prepared the Founding Manifesto and the Charter of the International Working-men's Association<sup>5</sup>. Existing on that times world-system manages to cope with this challenge through the partial assimilation of Marxism, as well as the socialist revolutionary movement, as well as through the trials of the World War I, which distracted popular moods from the ideals of a "communist future".

The source of the second anti-systemic breakthrough is shifting to the east – to Russia. We are talking about Lenin's strategy of "fanning the fire of the world revolution", which, having flared up in the Russian open spaces, was supposed to spread to the rest of the world. All publications and speeches of that time indicate that Lenin unconditionally subordinated the fate of the multinational Russian state to the interests of the "world revolution." His overarching task was to hold on power "... until the workers of all advanced countries come ... to help ..." <sup>6</sup>. He has repeatedly stressed that the national tasks of the Russian revolution must be subordinated to the interests of the international revolution. He persistently instilled that "... the interests of world socialism are higher than national interests, higher than the interests of the state ..." <sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Рахманов, А. Б. (2013). Концепция зависимости А.Г. Франка. *Вестник Московского Университета. Социология и политология*, 2, 52-67.

<sup>2</sup> Валлерстайн, И. (2003). *После либерализма*. Москва: Едиториал УРСС.

<sup>3</sup> Валлерстайн, И. (2008). *Исторический капитализм. Капиталистическая цивилизация*. Москва: КМК.

<sup>4</sup> Тойнби, А. Дж. (1991). *Постижение истории*. Москва: Прогресс.

<sup>5</sup> Маркс, К., Энгельс, Ф. (1955). *Учредительный манифест и Устав Международного товарищества рабочих*. Москва: Государственное издательство политической литературы, 4, 419-459.

<sup>6</sup> Ленин, В. И. (1918). Доклад о внешней политике на объединенном заседании ВЦИК и Московского совета 14 мая 1918 г. В: *Полное собрание починений*, 36, 327-345. <<https://leninism.su/works.html>> (2020, April, 05).

<sup>7</sup> Ленин, В. И. (1918). Речь на IV Чрезвычайном Всероссийском Съезде Советов 14-16 марта 1918 г. В: *Полное собрание починений*, 36, 89-123. <<https://leninism.su/works.html>> (2020, April, 05).

“We bring and must bring the greatest national sacrifices for the sake of the highest interest of the world proletarian revolution”<sup>1</sup>.

The world-system coped this challenge quite quickly. It suppressed armed revolutionary uprisings in different parts of the world, and shifted the attention of the population to the resolving their everyday life issues during the economic crisis.

The third large-scale anti-system action became an ordeal for the world system. This system was faced with not a hypothetical, but real anti-system – Stalin’s socialism. This anti-system was built on other principles, with other management and other geopolitical strategy than the old world, which (according to the Marxism) have to be abolished.

Stalin’s strategic plan was not to provoke a "world revolution", but to spread the consistent global expansion of a previously constructed world-system model (Soviet-style socialism). Especially for this the entire space of post-revolutionary Russia has turned into a huge construction site, on which a powerful military-economic and spiritually consolidated "new type" world-system have been created. This explains the Stalinist thesis about "building socialism in one separate country" and his super-efforts for quick creation of a strong, ideologically monolithic state with a single moral core, which decisively fenced off from the surrounding world-system. Stalin converted Lenin’s experience of forming a “political army of the socialist revolution” into the practice of forming a “political army of socialist globalization”.

Such scale of the task dictated the need to mobilize all social life for the socialist system establishment throughout the world. This was the main meaning to which the entire life of the Soviet people was subordinated. Hence – “futurocracy” (subordination of art, literature, cinema, the entire life of society to the ideals of a "bright future" in interpretation of the top Kremlin leadership), total ideologization of all public life spheres, exaltation of the "will to win", the system of "ideologically correct" education of the younger generation, intolerance towards skeptics and doubters, total state control and collectivization, a ruthless repressive apparatus, a system of "re-educational camps". In such way and by help of such extreme technologies a new world-system must be forged and prepared for a global offensive. To this day, there are heated discussions about the "human cost" of this world-system with its GULAG, Holodomor and mass repressions. But we remember, that with the same degree of intensity, discussions are being held about the "human cost" of the old, liberal world-system with its slave trade, genocide of the aboriginal population, bloody colonial wars, suppression of resistance movements against national and racial oppression (a topic that sharply escalated during mass demonstrations and pogroms in the USA under the slogan “Black Lives Matter!”).

Attempts to destroy the real socialist counter-system by the help of fascist militarized regimes generated by the liberal-bourgeois world-system turned out to be unsuccessful. For the first time, the world-system suffered significant geopolitical and economic losses. A number of countries of Eastern Europe, East Asia, and, subsequently, Africa and Latin America (Cuba), to one degree or another, dropped out of western sphere of influence and came under the control of the socialist “systemic alternative”. It became an essential threat to the world-system existence as a whole. A protracted "tug of war" process between the socialist and capitalist world-systems had began. In it one side tried to take advantage of the contradictions, mistakes, miscalculations, and failures of the opposite side.

On the one hand, the Bretton Woods model operated, which tied all pro-Western countries to the dollar equivalent. On the other hand, countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance made the conditional ruble the basis of their economic activities. At the same time, the Stalinist attempt to the complete crush of capitalist world-system and it replacing by socialist one, was made for the last time at the turn of the 50s. It was undertaken after successful revolutions in the Far East (primarily the Chinese People’s Revolution), as well as during the proxy-war between the USSR and the United States on the Korean Peninsula.

Assessing this historical period, I. Wallerstein wrote: “Marxism-Leninism remained an effective teaching as long as Stalin was alive. The leader pursued an ideological line with the help of periodic party cleansings and repressions within the USSR and strict tutelage over like-minded people and allies outside its borders. After Stalin’s death, the main political question immediately arose: who will be able to take over the management of the Stalinist system of supervision and control? As it turned out, no one could”<sup>2</sup>.

Stalin’s successors were mired in political intrigues, in narrow-minded and ineffective geopolitical combinations, in imitations of a "victorious movement towards communism”. Having stopped in its

<sup>1</sup> Ленин В. И. *Ценные признания Пятирима Сорокина*. Ленин В. И. Полное собрание сочинений. В: *Полное собрание сочинений*, 36, 188-197. <<https://leninism.su/works.html>> (2020, April, 05).

<sup>2</sup> Валлерстайн, И. (2010). Ленин и ленинизм сегодня и послезавтра. *Эксперт*, 1 (735) <<https://expert.ru/expert/2011/01/lenin-i-leninizm-segodnya-i-poslezavtra/>> (2020, April, 05).

external progress, the socialist world-system began to lose perspective, ossify, lose innovative potential, and, consequently, competitiveness. Ultimately, Soviet society began to lose the meaning of its historical purpose. So after decades of intensive efforts to play on the contradictions and miscalculations of the socialist system, to corrupt its political elite, to impose Western meanings to the Soviet people who were in losing of their own meaning of life, the liberal world-system managed to destroy and partially assimilate the contestant.

M. Gorbachev and his team, which completely lost their understanding of the creative meaning of the socialist world-system, became the "knockout blow". Gorbachev's limited outlook made it possible to see only the narrow consumerist horizons of the bourgeois world-system, about the structural doom of which had written Marx, the world revolution against which started Lenin and "systematically oust" of it had preparing Stalin. The self-destruction of the USSR, the anti-system that was once dangerous for the West, but has lost its moral core and original historical meaning, has become a colossal historical chance for the galvanization and arise of the liberal-bourgeois world.

However, in the coming third decade of the 21st century, the new heterogeneous contour of the global anti-system is appearing. Most likely, it can be considered as a set of anti-system trends. These include the Islamic religious-political anti-system, which converts the religious rejection of Western civilization into a policy of jihad. However, for all its claims to the anti-system role, the Islamic world continues to depend on the dominant world system, – economically, financially, technologically.

Modern Russia, in a sense, can also claim the status of anti-system. Beginning with Vladimir Putin's speech in Munich (February 2007), there has been a clear increase of "Russian controversy." The problem, which N. Danilevsky pointed out in his book "Russia and Europe"<sup>1</sup>, is exacerbated again. This trend received its modern ideological form in the official doctrine of "Greater Eurasia", and in more radical formulations – "Third Horde" (where the first Horde was the empire of Genghis Khan, and the second – the Stalinist Soviet Union)<sup>2</sup>.

However, with all its critical attitude to the existing world-system, the current official Russia does not have a clearly expressed alternative global project. She continues to be in the interior of liberal-bourgeois values, together with their ideologists and their conceptual symbol – the luxurious memorial center of Boris Yeltsin in Yekaterinburg. And the political elite of Russia continues to call the capitalist world-system forwards the "partners" as well. Thus, Russia's geopolitical opposition to the West does not mean that it is essentially anti-systemic.

This is probably why there are more and more intensive discussions and more active political forces inside Russia who, calls for a "left turn", for a "socialist renaissance." In their opinion, it means not only returning to Russia the lost values of justice, internationalism and equality, but also returning the status of the global anti-system movement vanguard. I. Wallerstein wrote about the presentiment of such a turn in the last century 90s: "Over time, Lenin's political rehabilitation is highly likely in Russia. By 2050, he may well become the main national hero"<sup>3</sup>. We add that, by all indications, this can happen much earlier. Moreover, the main topic of public discussions in modern Russia is not V. Lenin, but I. Stalin. In any case, Russia continues to search for new meanings to justify its geopolitical ambitions and its right to global leadership.

The innovation of the 21st century was a left-wing radical tilt that emerged in the very core of the current world-system – the United States of America. According to Michael Recktenwald, a professor at New York University, "Left-wing Americans have become very aggressive in defending their position... It is clear that the left has a collective hysteria. I'm not talking about the left in the narrow sense of the word, that is, not only about the radical antifa, socialists and communists, but I mean those many people who previously called themselves liberals, and later became very illiberal"<sup>4</sup>.

In this context, attention is drawn to the Bernie Sanders' political moving. Being a socialist, he uses the Democratic Party political resource to turn socialism into the mainstream of American political life. And if Bernie is recognized as the "grandfather of modern American socialism", then 32-year-old beauty,

<sup>1</sup> Данилевский, Н. Я. (1991). *Россия и Европа*. Москва: Книга.

<sup>2</sup> Лермонтов, М. (2019). «Третья Орда» – проект новой идеологии сильной России. *Regnum* <<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2727412.html>> (2020, April, 05).

<sup>3</sup> Валлерстайн, И. (2010). Ленин и ленинизм сегодня и послезавтра. *Эксперт*, 1 (735) <<https://expert.ru/expert/2011/01/lenin-i-leninizm-segodnya-i-poslezavtra/>> (2020, April, 05).

<sup>4</sup> Ректенвальд, М. (2019). «Левые зашли слишком далеко»: профессор США. *ТВ-Новосту* <<https://ru.rt.com/epzd>> (2020, April, 05).

congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is perceived by many as a sex symbol of the United States socialist transformation. Supporting the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party, she "rolls" the organization "Democratic Socialists of America" in every possible way.

A very curious world-system combination is playing out before our eyes. If the oligarchic elite of the Democratic Party (D. Biden, H. Clinton, B. Obama, etc.) is striving to establish a transnational pyramid of global monopoly governance, then the left-wing radical wing of the Democratic Party (B. Sanders, A. Cortes, E. Warren) seeks to use this pyramid for the socialist ideas implementation. That is, in the face of the American democratic project we have two globalisms, one is quasi-liberal, in the D. Soros – D. Biden style, the other is quasi-socialist in the B. Sanders – A. Cortez style.

But today the main subject of counter-systemic transformation is in the Far East. This is China. It confirms the thesis, known since the beginning of the twentieth century, that the center of revolutionary activity is shifting to the East. It should be noted that the modern Chinese "center of revolutionary activity" has acquired a new quality. Since the late 70s of the twentieth century. China's development proceeded in accordance with the concept of "taoguang yanghuei" (keeping in the background and not showing yourself). Assessing the real possibilities of that time, Deng Xiaoping emphasized that China should not have assumed the role of leader, but should refrain from confrontation and not join the opposing groups. But already from the second decade of the XXI-st century, the transformed China begins to open himself up to the world in a new way.

Powerful, one and a half billion population country, which has risen on the Far Eastern horizon, has become a demonstration of a fundamentally new world-system strategy. Its essence lies in the consistent and steady "embedding" of a new (China-centered) counter-system cluster into the existing world-system with its subsequent transformation from the inside. At the same time, a special quality of this cluster is noted – the ability to openness and adaptation while maintaining and strengthening the internal semantic core and immunity to the so-called "alien influences".

At one time, Z. Brzezinski<sup>1</sup> actively used the thesis of "convergence" between the socialist and capitalist systems, implying the complete absorption of socialism by capitalism. In the case of the USSR, he succeeded. However, he could not imagine that this thesis in a directly opposite sense would be used by socialist China. First, the PRC carried out "internal convergence" – the use of capitalist methods of stimulating business activity in the interests of socialist strategic planning and effective social policy. The next step of "convergence on the contrary" was a China-centric strategy, the development and absorption of the liberal world-system by a global system of rational and societal cooperation. One of the manifestations of this new convergent strategy is the "Belt and Road" project, which is capable to transform the endless Eurasian continent into a grandiose construction site with enormous scientific and technical potential and great social opportunities.

Many experts note that in the modern political rhetoric of China there are no dogmatic calls for the victory of "world communism", as well as the recognition of liberal-democratic dogma as "the only correct ideology of the 21st century." Modern China does not at all seek to impose on the world an "ideological alternative of a universal scale". He acts prudently and carefully, engaged in an invisible but steady "re-commutation" of the existing world-system on Chinese terms – a systemic, mutually beneficial and logistically thought-out cooperation. It gradually changes the "global being", thereby programming the change in the "global consciousness".

Significant in this aspect is the editorial publication of the Xinhua News Agency, which emphasizes: "Xi Jinping proposed to develop a new type of international relations based on the principles of cooperation and common benefit ..." (Xi Jinping, 2018). It follows that a logical continuation of the internal Chinese reforms will be the management reform of the entire existing world-system. It is clear that the success in the implementation of such a strategy depends on the level of scientific and technological modernization and the quality of life of the society that claims to be the epicenter of the new world-system. However, China's impressive successes in science, education, healthcare and social innovation, as well as powerful technological breakthroughs in the Chinese industry, indicate that it is here the epicenter of a new world-system may well form.

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<sup>1</sup> Бжезинский, З. (1986). *План игры: Геостратегическая структура ведения борьбы между США и СССР*. Москва: Прогресс.

<sup>2</sup> Russian.News.Cn (2018). *Си Цзиньпин – человек, который ведет реформы Китая в новую эпоху*. Синьхуа <[http://russian.news.cn/2018-12/18/c\\_137683059.htm](http://russian.news.cn/2018-12/18/c_137683059.htm)> (2020, April, 05).

We can agree with I. Wallerstein's thesis that "we will no longer live in the conditions of a capitalist world economy. Instead, we will evolve within a new order or orders, a new historical system or systems"<sup>1</sup> (Wallerstein, 2008). This topic is developed by economic analyst M. Khazin. He notes that the 2020s are "the last attempt by the liberal beau monde to maintain world domination at all costs. They understand that what they do not break today or tomorrow will go on the counterattack the day after tomorrow.... Even the Pope, contrary to all the logic of the Vatican in recent decades, has begun to hint that a left turn is needed"<sup>2</sup>

**Conclusion.** This is how the fate of the world-system and its systemic alternative takes shape in the first quarter of the 21st century. It is difficult to say what the content of the new historical era will be in detail. It is unlikely that it will become "the victory of all good over all bad." Most likely, such a change of eras is reminiscent of the old Chinese idea of history as a "change of vicissitudes", when one vicissitude is replaced by a new, unexplored historical vicissitude. But this means only one thing: the "mole of history" is doing its job. Antisystemic and counter-systemic attempts to change the picture of the world that has developed over the past centuries, despite all its "ups and downs", "ebb and flow", change this picture. Many analysts talk about the growing chaos in world relations, but from this chaos a new logos must inevitably be born. A new world-system reality is completing the 500-year history of the old capitalist world-system and opening a new, unfamiliar, historical era.

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2. Russian.News.Cn (2018). *Si TSzinpin – chelovek, kotoryy vedet reformy Kitaya v novuyu epokhu. Sinkhua* [Xi Jinping is the man who is leading China's reforms into a new era. Xinhua] <[http://russian.news.cn/2018-12/18/c\\_137683059.htm](http://russian.news.cn/2018-12/18/c_137683059.htm)> (2020, April, 05). [in Russian].
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<sup>1</sup> Фисун, А. А. (2018). *Мир-системный анализ как теория геоисторических изменений*. <<http://abuss.narod.ru/Biblio/fisun.htm>> (2020, April, 05).

<sup>2</sup> Regnum (2020). «*Мы держимся и имеем шансы на выигрыш*» – Хазин о внешней политике России. <<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/3085149.html>> (2020, April, 05).

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