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MANIFESTATIONS OF QUALITATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD-SYSTEM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

ПРОЯВИ ЯКІСНОЇ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ СВІТОСИСТЕМИ НА ПОЧАТКУ XXI СТ.

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якісної трансформації світосистеми на початку XXI ст.
Науково-методична стаття.*

У статті розглянуто узагальнення концептуального бачення цілісної світосистемності на початку XXI ст., що дає підстави бачити її консолідацію в результаті розвитку процесів глобалізації, наявних об'єктивних умов проявів центробіжних сил, які народжені інформаційним суспільством. Позитивний результат уявляється в оформленні інституціонально-політичного глобального регулювання сучасної світосистемності. Показано розвиток процесів глобалізації у дослідницькому контексті, що активізує питання про формування та відповідні трансформації цілісності світу, яка розуміється у наявності деяких інтегративних якостей цілого, що створюється в результаті об'єднання окремих компонентів через потужну сукупність світових зв'язків, відношень та взаємодій, які формують глобалізований світ.

Ключові слова: трансформація, світосистемність, цілісність, глобалізація, процеси глобалізації, економічна кооперація, система

Zakharchenko V.I., Lukianchuk O.M., Balahonova O.V. Manifestations of Qualitative Transformation of the World-System at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Scientific and methodical article.

The article considers the generalization of the conceptual vision of the integral world-system at the beginning of the 21st century, which gives grounds to see its consolidation as a result of the development of globalization processes, the existing objective conditions for the manifestations of centrifugal forces that are born of the information society. A positive result is seen in the design of the institutional and political global regulation of the modern world-system. The development of globalization processes is shown in the research context, which activates the question of the formation and corresponding transformations of the integrity of the world, which is understood in the presence of some integrative qualities of the whole, which is created as a result of the unification of individual components through a powerful set of world connections, relations and interactions that form the globalized world.

Keywords: transformation, World-System, integrity, globalization, globalization processes, economic cooperation, system

At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is represented as a single society composed of different nations and peoples, which have formed more than 200 states. What stands out immediately is the distinctiveness of all these countries; it is impossible to find among them, so to speak, "twins" with identical social identities, and this is entirely natural. Each nation has its own unique destiny and historical path; a vivid example is the Ukrainian people, who are currently heroically defending their nation. It is important to notice and feel the changes taking place on our planet right now: at the dawn of the new millennium, humanity has approached a new historical threshold of profound transformation. Today, socio-economic relations between all countries are rapidly developing, making them increasingly interdependent, revealing new shared values that unite and lead toward the formation of a global economy based on principles of free and equal cooperation.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to carefully examine the main socio-economic differences between countries in terms of their roles in the international division of labor, the degree of post-industrial development, the structure of property relations, the forms of economic governance, and other factors. This is only possible if we understand where and how the integrated world system is moving. Taking into account all the serious challenges our country faces, the above-mentioned tasks remain highly relevant for Ukraine as well. T. Artyomova emphasizes: "To successfully counter the trap of situational development at the stage of systemic modernization of the economy, it is especially important for leadership

structures to be able to combine the positive experience of previous market transformations in post-socialist countries with the best European and global traditions of organizing human living space, and to channel Ukraine's future trajectory in this direction" [1].

The development of globalization processes in the first quarter of the 21st century brings to the forefront the issue of the formation and corresponding transformations of the world's integrity. What do we mean by integrity? It refers to the presence, within the modern world, of certain integrative qualities of a whole, which are created through the unification of separate parts/components by means of a powerful network of global connections, relations, and interactions that together form the globalized world. Possessing such integrative qualities of a whole allows us to consider the world as a system [9]. Therefore, the question of world integrity transforms into the question of the World-System.

Analysis of recent research and publications

One of the schools that has developed world-systems analysis is the Centre for Economic Research at the Fernand Braudel Center at the University of Birmingham. Among the publications addressing such issues is the Journal of World-Systems Research (American Sociological Association). This field has been significantly shaped by the foundational works of world-systems theory's pioneers – Giovanni Arrighi, Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Antonio Gramsci. Among contemporary foreign scholars worth mentioning are Chirot D., Halsall P., Lechner F., and Zuykov R. Ukrainian researchers also contribute to this field, including Artyomova T. [1], Halchynskiy A. [2], Klymovskiy S. [5], Kutuev P. [6], Pohorylyi D. [7], Shaban I. [11], Shelukhin V., and Tsymba T.

World-Systems theory is often criticized for its excessive focus on the economy and insufficient attention to culture, as well as for prioritizing regions over the state. The sources of criticism toward the World-Systems approach, whose founder is considered to be the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, include positivists, orthodox Marxists, proponents of state autonomy, and cultural theorists. By analyzing various perspectives on the state of this system, it becomes possible to search for positive development paths for our country, which has faced extremely difficult conditions over the past eleven years.

One of the schools engaged in the development of World-System Analysis is the Centre for Economic Research at the Fernand Braudel University of Birmingham. Among the key publications addressing such issues is the Journal of World-Systems Research, published by the American Sociological Association. This theoretical direction was founded and shaped by scholars such as Giovanni Arrighi, Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Antonio Gramsci. Among contemporary foreign researchers working within this tradition, one should mention Daniel Chirot, Paul Halsall, Frank Lechner, and Roman Zuykov. These issues are also actively explored by Ukrainian scholars, including Tetyana Artyomova [1], Anatolii Halchynskiy [2], Serhii Klymovskiy [5], Pavlo Kutuev [6],

Dmytro Pohorylyi [7], Ihor Shaban [11], as well as Volodymyr Shelukhin and Tetiana Tsymba. Identification of previously unresolved aspects of the general problem: World-System Theory has faced criticism for being overly focused on economic dimensions while neglecting cultural factors, and for prioritizing regions over nation-states. Sources of critique include positivists, orthodox Marxists, advocates of state autonomy, and scholars from cultural studies. By analyzing these varying perspectives on the current state of the World-System, it becomes possible to seek constructive developmental trajectories for Ukraine – a country that has found itself in extremely difficult circumstances over the past eleven years.

The aim of the article is to generalize the conceptual vision of a unified World System at the beginning of the 21st century, identify objective factors of its consolidation as a result of globalization processes, as well as analyze the transformations occurring within this system against the background of modern geopolitical challenges. The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of political analysis, global studies, systems theory and sociology. The methods of comparative analysis, systems generalization and forecasting are used.

The main part

The Emergence of the World-System. The development of a coherent system of world economic relations (WER) in the second half of the 20th century began with the advent of an interdisciplinary project known as the World-System Approach (WSA) [3]. At its core was the establishment of a new global order, the spread of market relations aimed at capital accumulation, which ultimately justified the emergence of world integrity. The direct creation of the WSA is associated with the name of the sociologist, political scientist, and philosopher – the neo-Marxist Immanuel Wallerstein (1930-2019) and his works (*The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 1974; *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy*, 1980; *The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy*, 1989). World-System analysis is not solely Wallerstein's invention, although his role in the development of this theory is undeniable. Rather, it is a product of the evolution of global thought, with roots tracing back to the first bourgeois revolutions of the 17th century, possibly influenced by Marxism, its left-wing critiques, systems theory, and other branches of social research. "His major achievement as a scientific method was the transition from viewing history as the history of individual countries to the operation of large social supersystems encompassing entire continents. Within this framework, human history is presented as the history of the evolution of local systems whose boundaries do not always coincide with the borders of individual states, ethnic groups, or territories" [5].

It is possible to consider that the formation of the modern World-System was completed by the end of the 19th century, with most of the world incorporated into its structure. A distinct phase of its renewal can be

seen in the reintegration of post-socialist countries into the SWER and the intensification of globalization processes during the current stage. The basis for these processes has been qualitatively new transformational phenomena in the global economy, along with the achievements of the scientific-technological and information revolutions. It appears that these phenomena of global significance justify raising the question of the qualitative transformations of the world economic system. In this context, the task of identifying qualitatively new properties emerging within world integrity gains particular relevance. Since systematicity manifests itself in various spheres of the SWER, it is necessary to fully adopt an interdisciplinary approach and to examine global economic interactions and the interactions between actors in order to affirm the systemic nature of world economic relations.

The solution to this task is envisioned through the preliminary determination of the criteria for world integrity. By relying on new systemic phenomena and processes that reflect the main trends of globalization in the early 21st century, it becomes possible to identify key manifestations of the qualitative transformation of the World-System. The general theory of systems will also prove useful here.

Criteria of World Integrity Systematicity or integrity of any object is determined by its possession of specific qualities. According to the ternary language of A. Uyomov (1928-2012), a system is defined by three components: object/process, quality, and relation [10]. During the seminars led by A. Uyomov at the Odesa branch of the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR in the 1980s, about thirty variations of the concept of "system" were developed based on ternary language. The most widespread definition of a system, provided by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-1972), defines a system as a set of elements interacting with one another [9]. The concepts included in the definition of a system are closely interconnected and, according to Bertalanffy, cannot be defined independently; rather, they are usually determined through one another, clarifying each other. Therefore, the sequence in which they are presented should be considered conventional. From this perspective, "the relationship of stable interactions among parts of the whole is the principal criterion of any system" [9].

The interaction of elements, as a property of a system, is capable of generating its integrative quality, which cannot be reduced to the sum of the qualities of the system's individual elements. Such an "integrative quality of the system is the main indicator of its integrity" [9].

The emergence of the World-System is linked, through the WSA, to the origin and development of the world market and the relations of labor division within the capitalist economy. The stimulus for this process is considered to be the tendency toward the endless accumulation of capital, which is a fundamental feature of capitalism. Capitalism, as Wallerstein asserts, is characterized by the selfish goal of the capitalist owner – accumulation for the sake of further accumulation –

as well as by the specific relations that the capitalist must establish with other actors to achieve this goal [5]. The interest in solving the task outlined above prompts the need to define the main characteristics of these relations within the modern World-System. The WSA reveals the essence of these relations through the concept of the core-periphery division of the world-economy, which reflects an unequal distribution of labor and corresponding unequal exchange between its levels.

Some earlier scholars emphasized a fundamental difference between the sector of the free competitive market and the sector of monopoly. They associated capitalism exclusively with the monopoly sector, considering free market competition relations as not characteristic of capitalism. This division was based on the following logic: since the capitalist's motivation is the endless accumulation of capital, achieving this goal requires maximizing profit. In other words, profits from relatively monopolized processes are much higher than from competitive (market) processes, because monopolists, not restrained by competition, are to some extent able to dictate higher prices in the market and thus receive super-profits [8].

The concept of the core-periphery division reflects this distinction between the free competitive market sector and the monopoly sector, as manifested in the international division of labor [4]. The level of the world-economy identified by the WSA (the core or center), which accumulates the main share of surplus value created within the system, specializes in the international division of labor in the production of monopolized goods. In contrast, products manufactured under conditions of market competition, which do not generate monopoly super-profits for producers, are characteristic of the production processes of the periphery. The level of the world economy where relatively monopolized and competitive production processes are mixed is referred to in the WSA as the semi-periphery. Through unequal exchange, the semi-periphery simultaneously loses surplus value to the core and gains it at the expense of the periphery [3].

The crucial point is that "the core-periphery concept is a concept of relations" [4]. Thus, the source of core-periphery relations lies in the unequal distribution of labor. The expression of these relations is the corresponding unequal exchange between the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. As summarized by R. Zuikov, "As a result, the surplus value generated within the world-economy is redistributed from the producers in the periphery to the producers in the core" [3].

It can be concluded that from the standpoint of the WSA, the fundamental criteria of World-System formation are the core-periphery relations along the axis of labor division, which are realized through the mechanism of unequal exchange between the core (center) and the periphery. These relations in international economic activity constitute the hierarchical structure of the world economy. Its integrative quality can be seen as the maximization of profits obtained by the monopolized sector concentrated in the core, which is achieved through monopolistically high prices for its products and unequal exchange relations

with the competitive sector of the periphery. Thus, core-periphery relations are a necessary condition for capital accumulation by the core of this system.

Globalization of World Economic Relations. Since the end of the 20th century, there has been an intensification of transnational processes, whose essence is expressed in the emergence of new forms of international division of labor. Alongside the previously dominant intersectoral division of labor, intra-sectoral and technological divisions have developed. This has led to an increasingly strong trend of enterprises from highly developed countries and several developing countries moving toward large-scale investment and production cooperation [5]. As a result of the activities of international business groups – the main driving force of economic globalization – the production of components (units, parts, and assemblies) for future final products has become distributed among manufacturers located in different national economies, wherever it is more economically efficient. This situation persisted until April 2025, when it was disrupted by tariffs and customs duties introduced by the President of the United States under the declaration of an economic state of emergency. In addition to the international division of labor, an internal corporate division of labor also gained widespread adoption, in which production functions are distributed within corporations themselves but extend across national borders. Business groups based in highly developed countries (the cores of the world economy), aiming to reduce production costs, began relocating mass production – primarily of medium-technology goods – to developing countries by establishing branch plants there. This contributed to the transition of these newly industrialized countries to a higher, semi-peripheral level within the SWER.

As a result, the development of transnational cooperation relations within the SWER has led to the formation of an international reproductive structure. This structure has been formed by inter-corporate production relations carried out within networks of business groups and their subsidiaries. Of the three levels of the world economy identified through the WSA, two – the core and the semi-periphery – have been integrated into this business group activity structure [3]. The periphery, where non-monopolized industries (mainly extractive industries) are concentrated and which does not participate in transnational production corporation relations, has thus been excluded from the world transnational structure.

The SWER levels (core and semi-periphery) and their actors, operating within business groups and their subsidiaries, are connected through stable functional relations within such a structure. The core – namely the business groups operating within it – performs the function of creating innovations (new types of goods/services, new methods of production organization and management) and developing new production technologies. Innovations and cutting-edge technologies allow core business groups to maintain monopolization in the most efficient sectors of production. The semi-periphery, through the subsidiaries of business groups operating there, ensures mass

production (at reduced costs) based on technologies transferred to them by their parent business groups (from the core).

The integration of these SWER levels and economic actors through functional interactions within a globalized economic reproductive structure creates an integrative quality of the whole. This manifests in the super-profits achieved by business groups through a combination of high prices for products manufactured with monopolized technologies (secured by innovation and patenting by the core business groups) and minimized production costs (a function of the subsidiaries in the semi-periphery). The special resilience of the globalized economic structure, due to its intra-corporate nature of relations and functional linkages between actors and levels, creates an integrative quality of the whole, allowing the transnational reproductive structure to be considered a global economic system.

A conceptual-theoretical description of the new forms of international division of labor was proposed by the globalized economic approach [8]. It identifies the formation of transnational production-investment network structures that integrate segments located in different national economies, thereby turning them into parts of transnational closed economic associations (cores).

By combining the methodologies of the World-System Approach and the globalized economic approach, it is possible to propose a three-dimensional spatial model of the SWER system at the beginning of the 21st century, which clearly illustrates its structural levels, their functions within the SWER, and their involvement in the globalized world economic system (see Fig. 1).

The presented model vertically reflects the primary specialization of the structural levels in the international division of labor among them. Thus, it highlights the functions performed by the structural levels of the SWER. The horizontal level of the model illustrates the transnational network-based production-investment linkages that occur at the core and semi-periphery levels, including production cooperation and technological international division of labor. Transnational production areas – cores – are depicted as ovals, formed through the interaction of business groups and their subsidiaries, as well as integrating segments of various national economies where these business groups operate. The arrows between them represent inter-corporate labor division, including technological cooperation among cores.

It is known that the development of transnational economic processes within the SWER has created a trend leading to the transformation of the World-System, which was initially formed through core-periphery relations. Prior to the widespread expansion of transnational processes, the specialization of world economy levels was primarily reflected in the intersectoral division of labor. According to this form of international labor division, the SWER levels were mainly connected through unequal exchange relations – thus, core-periphery relations were realized through international trade exchange.

As a result of the development of transnational processes in the early 21st century, the core and the semi-periphery became interconnected through transnational production-investment relations [6]. That is, the labor division relations between these levels

began to be realized not only through exchange but increasingly through unequal production cooperation within the networks of business groups and their subsidiaries [11].

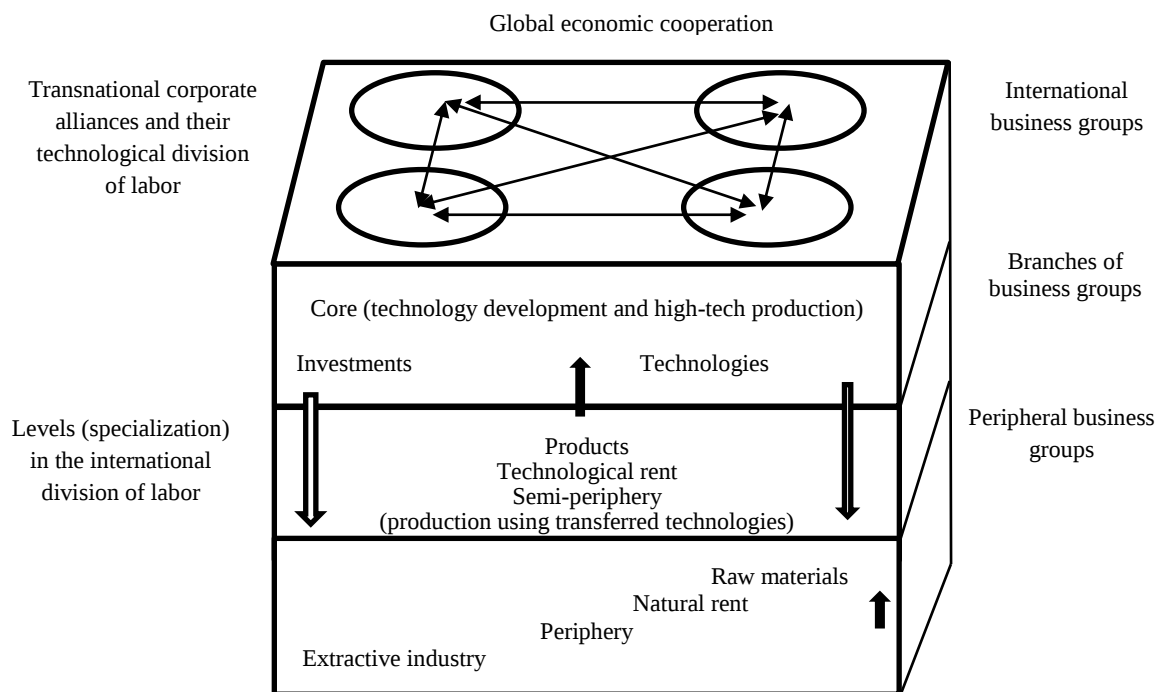


Figure 1. Three-dimensional Spatial Model of the World Economic Relations System
at the Beginning of the 21st Century
Source: compiled by authors on materials [3]

Another fundamentally important manifestation of the transformation of the World-System is the trend toward spatial-territorial differentiation of the contemporary world system into regional subsystems, complementing its structural core-periphery branching. This trend is expressed through processes of regionalization, often materializing in the form of integration associations [14].

Today, it can be observed that the development of transnational processes between the economies of countries within the same region creates the prerequisites for the organizational formation of regional integration. However, the newly created integration association also forms a single economic space, which objectively promotes the processes of transnationalization of economic relations within its framework [6]. At the same time, economic relations between integration groupings act as a component of the global integrated system of production, distribution, and supply, created and developed by the business groups of the countries within these blocks. However, it must be noted that such processes may be disrupted (or, in extreme cases, almost dismantled) during severe pandemics (such as COVID-19 in 2020-2022) or by the declaration of a state of emergency in a leading economically developed country (e.g., the United States, April 2025). Thus, it can be assumed that within the framework of the world economic system, the consolidation of international economic

subsystems of interaction is taking place. The differentiation of the system into a number of subsystems reflects the processes of consolidation of regional economic clusters (alliances of business groups), which form the axes of the World-System structure and serve as its pillars [15].

Transformation of the SWER. I. Wallerstein identified two historical types of world-systems. The first is the so-called world-empire, a self-sufficient economic system bound together by a common political structure that concentrates control over the World-System in a single center. The second is the world-economy, which is also self-sufficient but is held together only by the division of labor and lacks a unified territorial-political structure [6]. In other words, within the framework of the world-economy, there exist numerous independent political units – states. The form of political organization in the world-economy is the system of interstate relations.

The modern World-System has, throughout its 400-year history, developed in the form of a world-economy. According to representatives of the WSA, the capitalist system cannot exist in any other form than this [7]. This is due to the fact that capitalism requires a specific relationship between capital and state power. If the ruling elites become too strong – as Wallerstein notes happened in large empires – their interests tend to outweigh the interests of producers, and the endless accumulation of capital ceases to be a central priority

[10]. Thus, capitalism requires large markets and the existence of a multiplicity of states.

In the course of the historical development of the modern international system, a specific mechanism emerged for maintaining interstate equilibrium – one that prevents the transformation of the system into a world-empire, which could occur through the excessive strengthening of one state and its subordination (absorption) of others. According to Wallerstein, the functional principles of the interstate system include the so-called balance of power – a mechanism designed to ensure that no single state would ever have the ability to transform the system into a world-empire [4].

The dynamic nature of political and economic relations within the World-System demands attention. "The dynamic balance of forces in the interstate system appears to be its integrative feature. It was maintained through functional relations among parts of the system – the states" [3]. The essence of these relations was mutual military-political deterrence, which prevented any one state or coalition of states from becoming strong enough to threaten the independence of others and the continued existence of the system as a whole. Throughout history, there have been attempts by certain states to disrupt the balance of power in the system and achieve military-political domination over others. These attempts provoked counter-reactions, resulting in interstate wars [6].

It is from this perspective that the WSA interprets the significance of major interstate conflicts in the history of the World-System: the Thirty Years' War of the 17th century, the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century, the First and Second World Wars of the 20th century, and the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in the 21st century. During these conflicts, attempts were suppressed by the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleonic France, Imperial and Nazi Germany, and modern-day Russia to establish an empire-like state in Europe – a form fundamentally incompatible with the existence of a capitalist world-economy, whose core has been and remains the countries of Western Europe / the EU. Thus, for the WSA, the function of the interstate system in the modern World-System has been to preserve the latter in the form of a world-economy, thereby sustaining the existence and development of capitalism / market entrepreneurship.

Historically, the balance of power in the interstate system has taken different forms. From the late 17th to the early 20th century, it was polycentric – maintained by several major European powers [6]. In the second half of the 20th century, the balance of power acquired a bipolar configuration. However, it seems that the essence of the transformation of the interstate system and its function within the World-System during the latter half of the 20th century lies not in the number of power centers, but rather in the consequences of this balance.

After the Allies' victory in World War II, Western European countries – forming the core of the World-System – under the threat of communist expansion, were forced to bind themselves in a military-political alliance with the United States (also part of the core),

placing them in a subordinate position. This situation to some extent resembled the political structure of a world-empire. However, during the Cold War, the mutual deterrence between the USSR and the USA prevented the emergence of any single hegemon or form of imperial domination in the international system. Only the collapse of the bipolar structure at the turn of the 1980s-1990s shattered the relative balance of power in the interstate system. The United States emerged as the sole superpower – unbalanced by other states – while maintaining ties with the most developed countries through American-centered military-political alliances. It is worth emphasizing that, increasingly – especially in the economic sphere – the United States faces competition from both the EU and China.

This structural transformation of the interstate relations system raises the question: has the World-System begun to shift from a world-economy form of political organization to a world-empire form?

Of course, despite certain imperial policy excesses by the United States on the periphery of the World-System (Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Sudan), it cannot be unequivocally stated that its political structure is becoming imperial. There are several objective and subjective obstacles to such a transformation.

First, several powerful regional centers of power remain in the world that are not under U.S. control (most notably nuclear powers such as Russia, China, India, and Pakistan).

Second, the deepening and expansion of European Union integration provides a basis for a gradual shift of European states toward more equal military-political relations within the transatlantic alliance. (However, this trend was shaken by the return of President Trump's administration to the White House in 2025.)

Third, the complex institutional system of global regulation that emerged in the second half of the 20th century leaves little room for a single authoritarian type of international-political organization, such as an empire. Modern international law – whose principles are enshrined in the UN Charter – still defines the legality and legitimacy of foreign policy actions. (Though today, in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the use of veto power in the UN Security Council, these principles have come under scrutiny.) Given the presence of democratic regimes in most leading countries of the world, even the only superpower cannot ignore either this fact or global public opinion if it claims leadership of the democratic world.

In the second half of the 20th century, relations between countries that form the core of the World-System also underwent substantial qualitative transformation. As a result of globalization processes, the rigid patterns of rivalry and frequent confrontation typical of earlier eras gave way to complex interdependence. Interstate competition remains, but relationships have evolved from conflictual competition to competitive cooperation. This transformation in the nature of core-country relations created a need for coordinated efforts in managing global economic processes. As early as the 1970s, the Trilateral Commission began developing an ideology of coordi-

nated economic and foreign policy among the leading Western countries [4].

By the last quarter of the 20th century, these ideas were institutionalized through the activities of the G7 – the most economically advanced nations in the world. The combined potential of its members, their interdependence, and the convergence of goals and interests allowed the G7 to exert significant regulatory influence over global economic and political processes. In effect, the G7 began to evolve into a center for strategic planning and setting the agenda on issues of global governance [11].

It appears that economic globalization created the preconditions, and the dismantling of confrontational interstate structures stimulated a trend toward a qualitative transformation of the interstate system and its functions in the modern World-System. Instead of the former function of mutual deterrence among states, the system of interstate relations – formed by the group of leading developed countries – began to take on the role of coordinating global processes through cooperative regulation. This understanding makes the conclusion by A. Galchynskyi all the more logical: "From our perspective, it is entirely natural that I. Wallerstein raised the question of the 'end of the familiar world,' a completed stage in the development of the modern World-System, which, having reached a bifurcation point, «is unlikely to exist in fifty years" [2].

The fact that the most powerful transnational business groups – the key players in the global economic system and its core – are based in the national economies of the G7 countries allows for the following assumption [3]. These states have gradually formed a specific mechanism capable of regulating processes in the global system of economic interactions and thereby serving the interests and goals of their business groups – the source of their economic, financial, technological, and hence military-political power [13, 15].

From the perspective of general systems theory, such a mechanism can be seen as a cybernetic-type system, built atop the interaction system, providing a secondary level of process regulation [9]. This secondary regulation layer complements and partly replaces the self-regulation of the system of interactions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can identify the following key features of the qualitative transformation of World-

Systemicity in the context of the dynamic globalization processes of the early 21st century.

As a result of the development of global economic processes – reflected in new forms of international division of labor – the most engaged levels of the world economy (primarily the core and semi-periphery) became closely connected, not just through transactional or financial relations, but increasingly through technological, productional, cooperative, and investment ties. These relations formed, within the SWER, the structure of a global economic reproduction system, into which the two upper levels of the SWER – the core and semi-periphery – were integrated via transnational business groups and their subsidiaries. The networked structure of the global economy has thus become layered over the hierarchical core–periphery architecture of the capitalist world economy, creating a more complex and contradictory hybrid model of organization that blends hierarchical and networked principles.

A trend toward spatial-territorial differentiation of the modern World-System into regional subsystems has become evident through the creation of integration blocs. This differentiation reflects the emergence of regional clusters (business groups with corresponding centers of gravity) that form the internal subsystems of the global economic structure.

Significant transformations are underway in the interstate system of the World-System against the backdrop of Russia's war against Ukraine, China's ambitions regarding Taiwan, and shifts in the foreign and economic policy of the new/old U.S. administration, among others. Major global powers are no longer bound by mutual deterrence in the traditional sense, leading to a weakening of this system's structural coherence. Instead of equilibrium, there is now an informal but influential mechanism of global political and economic regulation (e.g., G7, G20, BRICS, OECD, and others [3]).

This conceptual generalization of a unified and coherent World-System at the start of the 21st century allows us to speak of its consolidation due to the ongoing processes of globalization. However, at the same time, we must acknowledge the emergence of centrifugal forces, fueled by the rise of the information society. The way forward may lie in developing institutional and political mechanisms of global regulation for the modern World-System. The foundations for such regulation are still under construction and remain the subject of ongoing discussion.

Abstract

The article a generalization of the conceptual vision of a unified World-System at the beginning of the 21st century has been carried out, providing grounds to perceive its consolidation as a result of globalization processes and the presence of objective conditions for the emergence of centrifugal forces generated by the information society.

A positive outcome appears in the institutional and political structuring of global governance over the modern World-System. The foundations of such a framework are only beginning to take shape and remain the subject of ongoing discussions. The development of globalization processes is analyzed within a research context that brings renewed attention to the formation and corresponding transformations of world unity – understood as the presence of certain integrative qualities of the whole. Such unity is generated through the consolidation of distinct components via a powerful network of global connections, relationships, and interactions that shape the globalized

world. Possession of these integrative qualities of wholeness enables us to consider the world as a system in its own right. The purpose of this article is to generalize the conceptual vision of a unified World System at the beginning of the 21st century, identify objective factors of its consolidation as a result of globalization processes, as well as analyze the transformations occurring within this system against the background of modern geopolitical challenges. The study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of political analysis, global studies, systems theory and sociology. The methods of comparative analysis, systems generalization and forecasting are used.

The most characteristic manifestations of a qualitative transformation of the World-System have been identified amid the turbulent processes of globalization at the beginning of the new millennium: as a result of the development of global economic processes, which led to the emergence of new forms of international division of labor, the levels of the world economy most actively involved in such processes have become closely interconnected not so much through traditional accounting relationships, but rather through more advanced technological, production, cooperative, and investment ties; a trend has emerged toward the spatial and territorial differentiation of the modern world-system into regional subsystems through the formation of integration blocs; significant transformations are taking place in the system of interstate relations within the world-system against the backdrop of Russia war against Ukraine.

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