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**THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR IN THE CONTEXT OF XXI-ST CENTURY
WORLD-SYSTEM CHANGES. EXPERIENCE OF I. WALLERSTEIN'S
METHODOLOGY**

The article is devoted to the consideration of the Russian-Ukrainian war problem in the context of global changes in the 21st century first quarter. The theory of world-system analysis, methods of historicism and comparativism were taken as the direct methodological basis of this issue. The novelty of the article lies in the comparison of the world-system process evolution (mid-XV – first quarter of the XXI century) with the world wars dynamics (from the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648 to the Cold War of 1946-1991). The authors hypothesized that these wars are triggers of the world-system self-development, phases of the previous world orders destruction and the establishment of new ones. Each world order records a certain upgrade in the development of the world-system. These are the Westphalian, Paris, Vienna, Versailles and Yalta-Potsdam world orders. A systemic failure in the world orders change is considered as one of the reasons for the Russian-Ukrainian war. Attention is drawn to the fact that the Cold War, which led to the collapse of the USSR and changed the actual state of affairs, nevertheless did not consolidate these results in the norms of the new world order. Thus, a situation of geopolitical ambiguity was formed, and that was used by Russia. The article also discusses I. Wallerstein's position on the "end of the world as we know it", marked by a streak of military clashes with all the signs of global "Thirty Years' War." It also examines his scenarios for a probable global future in the "post-liberal era."

Key words: world-system, russian-ukrainian war, world-order, methodology, I. Wallerstein, world wars.

Introduction. Terminological arrangements and circumstances of the situation. Based on the title of this article, the object of our research is the process of cardinal world-system changes in the first half of the 21st century. Moreover, the trigger and accelerator of this process is the Russian-Ukrainian war. And this is the main subject of our analysis.

The designated subject of research already indicates the high relevance of the stated topic, which since 02/24/22 has not left the front pages of newspapers and magazines, filling television broadcasts and social networks. However, with all the colossal information noise surrounding the tragedy of the Russian-Ukrainian War, the lack of serious and responsible analytics is obvious. Propaganda is trying to supplant it. This means that the real picture of the world is distorted, being that one of the components of propaganda is the construction of mutual accusations among the parties of conflict. Unlike propaganda, analytics tries to understand the hidden causes and mechanisms of current events. The meaning of the analytical approach was well illustrated by the famous Polish writer Andrzej Sapkowski: “There are no wars between Good and Evil, there are wars in which different sides have different interests” (Sapkovskii, 2024).

Materials and methods. It is in this spirit that we are trying to construct the presentation of our article. Its main task is to apply the methodology of world-system analysis to study the phenomenon of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its global consequences.

We propose to consider the Russian-Ukrainian war in the context of the evolution of the world system, which, according to I. Wallerstein and his school (A. Frank, B. Gills, S. Amin, J. Arrighi, T., Chase-Dunn, etc.) (Chase-Dunn, 2020) covers the era from the middle 15th to the 21st century and represents a self-developing system of capitalist relations. This system, from I. Wallerstein viewpoint, went through the phases of genesis, expansion, apogee and entered the phase of decline (Wallerstein, 2000). The main world-system principles were already formulated in the three-volume “Modern World-System”, the main work of I. Wallerstein. Currently, his methodology is not as active as it was a few years ago when it was in the focus of actual political discussions. However, the events of recent years and, above all, the very fact of the “unthinkable” Russian-Ukrainian war require us to move from the practice of “narrow commentators” to the practice of “social thinkers”, to see reality in the context of those fundamental processes that radically change the world.

Hypothesis and discussion. Based on the world-system methodology, we put forward the hypothesis that namely *world wars* were certain stages and, moreover, “upgrades”, phases of “development through catastrophe”. Thus, the phase of the world-system genesis was marked by the world Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648). The expansion phase of the world-system was marked by a whole series of wars: the Seven Years' World War (1756-1763), the Napoleonic Wars (1797-1815), the First World War or so called "Great" War (1914-1918), and the Second World War (1939-1945). Reaching the apogee in the development of the world system is associated with the Cold World War (1946 -1991).

It is quite clear that the 600-years period of the world-system existence was marked by a much larger number of wars, but there were only six of those that involved a large number of participants, vast geographical areas and, moreover, ended with the establishment of an officially approved world order.

Indeed, in the Thirty Years' War France, Sweden, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Protestant principalities of Germany, the Czech kingdom, Transylvania, Venice, Savoy, and the Republic of the United Provinces opposed the Habsburg Empire. The Anti-Habsburg coalition was supported by England, Scotland and the Russian Empire. At the same time, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Saxony, Brandenburg,

Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Graubünden, the Papal States, and Genoa came out on the side of the Habsburgs. The war began on the territory of the Holy Roman Empire and affected all European states to varying degrees. The areas that are today part of Germany were mostly suffered.

The total human losses of the Thirty Years' War vary, according to various estimates, from 3 to 9 million people, which, against the background of the total European population (from 15 to 20 millions), is a demographic catastrophe, surpassing in relative figures the losses in the Second World War (1939-1945). (Thirty Years' War, 2024).

Almost all the European great powers of that time, as well as most of the medium and small states of Europe, took part in the Seven Years' War. Even some Indian tribes inhabiting North America were drawn into the war. The most active participants in that war were: on the one hand, Austria, France, Russia, Spain, Saxony and Sweden; on the other - Prussia, Great Britain and Portugal.

The geographical scope of the Seven Years' War was even greater than that of the Thirty Years' War. This war took place both in Europe and overseas: in North America, the Caribbean, India, and the Philippines. Overall, more than 600,000 soldiers and 700,000 civilians were killed during the war. Total losses amounted to 1,300,000 people (The course of the Seven Years' War, 2024).

The Napoleonic Wars, in their totality, are also a gigantic world war that engulfed many countries and territories, grinding many human lives in its crucible. England, which ultimately became the organizer of the anti-French coalition, opposed Bonaparte, who relied on his one and a half million army and the group of puppet states he created. In addition to England itself, it included Prussia, Russia and Sweden.

And the theater of military operations during the era of the Napoleonic wars covered not only Europe, but also the Middle East with part of North Africa, as well as the adjacent waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Napoleon also nurtured the strategic idea of conquering India, having concluded a secret agreement with the Russian Emperor Paul 1 for this purpose. The Napoleonic World War (together of all its episodes) claimed the lives of over three million people (Lesaffer, 2024).

A century later, the “Great” World War I (1914-1918) breaks out. In its grandeur, breadth of geopolitical scope, scale of human, organizational, material, economic, scientific and technical resources, it surpasses all previous world wars combined. 38 of the 59 states that at that time existed, became participants in this war. And the number of military and civilian casualties (taking into account battles, bombing of cities, repression in occupied territories and epidemics) amounted to over 25 million people (Horne, 2018).

This war was many times surpassed by the next one, the Second (1939-1945) World War. It was attended by 61 states with a population of 1 billion 700 millions people, that is, about 80% of the total number of people living on the planet at that time. About 120 million members of the most able-bodied population were mobilized into the armed forces. And the losses totaled about 72 million people. The theater of military operations covered vast expanses of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and naval battles, including surface, submarine and aircraft carrier fleets, acquired an all-oceanic character. The explosion of two American atomic bombs in the Japanese

cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in the nuclear era in human history (Narinsky, 2020).

And finally, the sixth, “Cold” long (1946-1991) war also has its own quantitative and qualitative characteristics. Its operative theater has become truly global. It covered all of humanity with the help of the media, extensive intelligence networks, a “hybrid” combination of specific military operations with their numerous preparations and interpretations in the media, combined with all kinds of practices and influence on the human psyche and technologies of economic disruption. Ultimately, the task that W. Churchill could not solve in 1945 with his strategic plan “The Unthinkable” was solved with colossal effect. There was a crushing collapse of the Soviet-centric world-system and its core, the USSR.

In general, the human casualties of the Cold War “lethal segment” (victims of local wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Afghanistan, etc.), as well as losses in all kinds of “revolutionary insurgent” movements and actions (in Cambodia, Sudan, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Bolivia, Colombia, Namibia, Venezuela, Kurdistan, etc.) amounted, according to various estimates, from 12 to 20 million people. Russia's economic losses from the USSR collapse after the Cold War significantly exceeded the losses of the USSR after World War II. If in 1990 the USSR gross income (2.66 trillion USD) was 49% of the USA gross income (5.963 trillion USD), then by the beginning of 2000 the gross income of the USA (9.3 trillion USD) turned out to be greater than the gross income of post-Soviet Russia (0.2 trillion USD). It is in 46 (!!!) times. (Hoffmann, 2021).

We present all these arguments in order to emphasize the fact that among the numerous “ordinary” wars that filled the entire 600-year history of the capitalist world-system, several world wars, gigantic in their strength and global consequences, rise (Mann, 2023). The specificity of these wars lies not only in their geopolitical scale, the multitude of participants and the incalculability of losses. Their main distinguishing feature is establishment of a new world order after destroying the previous.

Thus, after the 30-Years' War, the Westphalian world order was established, ushering in the era of nation states and the observance of the religious tolerance principles.

As a result of the Seven Years' World War was concluded the Treaty of Paris, which laid the foundations for a new world order, according to which France ceded to England Canada, East Louisiana, some islands of the Caribbean, as well as the bulk of its colonies in India. The war ended the power of France in America. From that moment, England began its rapid ascent as the core of the world system. At the same time, there is a consolidation of the old and newly acquired British colonies, which after a decade and a half will result in a revolutionary uprising of North Americans against British rule.

After the Napoleonic wars, was established a new (now Viennese) world order, which buried Bonaparte's hopes for the revival and expansion of French imperial power. At the same time, it cleared the way for Britain to the heights of global dominance. This was an act of victory for the British world-economy over the Bonapartist world-empire.

The World War 1 leads to the establishment of the next world order (Versailles). In this world order there was no place for the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman

and Russian empires, while the British Empire only increased its scale and power. Another Anglo-Saxon country, the USA, the League of Nations initiator, for the first time outlined its global capabilities. At the same time, the established post-war world order caused serious socio-political tensions and imbalances. This resulted in revolutions and attempts to create several counter-systems (Soviet-Stalinist, Italian-fascist, German-Nazi and Japanese-militarist). All of them, each in their own way, were aimed to destroy the Versailles world-order and claimed to be the core of an alternative world system.

The need for a new global restructuring and a new global war has become obvious. The Second World War discarded the Versailles world order bankrupt and led to the establishment of a new, Yalta-Potsdam one. A lot has changed in it. Firstly, there was a change in the hegemony of the world system. The United States took the place of Great Britain. Secondly, instead of the liberal monopolar model of the world (Britain, as “first among equals”), a rigid bipolar model was adopted (USA-USSR) and the world was delimited into two spheres of influence of different types. Thirdly, the liberal-capitalist world-system, which reigned supreme in the world until the mid-twentieth century, faced a rigidly structured counter-system as a cluster of socialist countries grouped around the USSR.

Such a world order could not satisfy either side, so almost immediately, after the emergence of a bipolar world order, a grueling and protracted confrontation between the two systems began. It was called the “Cold War.”

After the collapse of the socialist system and the USSR as its core, the world order entered a paradoxical state. The documents of the Yalta-Potsdam era and its brainchild, the United Nations, are still in effect, but the real state of affairs has changed radically. Instead of a Soviet Union of almost 300 million people, surrounded by “true friends,” there remained a Russia of 140 million people, which lost 5 million square km. territory, moreover, surrounded by the scattered republics. Moreover, some of them turned out to be hostile to Russia. “True comrades” in the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact quickly reoriented towards the European Union and NATO. (Brzezinski, 2017).

The new geopolitical reality has not received an adequate international legal settlement. And when the *force of law* is inactive, the *law of force* inevitably begins to operate. Russia, having actually lost its former international positions, begins to demand her return, citing the outdated, but to this day not denounced Yalta-Potsdam agreements. On this situation she bases her right to revenge.

A way out of this paradoxical situation was possible only in two ways: a) through the voluntary conclusion of a new comprehensive international agreement that honestly and adequately legitimizes the new geopolitical realities; b) through a forceful redistribution of roles in the new geopolitical situation. Russia took the second path. Moreover, its desire for historical revenge coincided with claims for the redistribution of global wealth among numerous peoples with low living standards. Moreover, it coincided with China's desire to radically restructure the entire existing world-system, ending the entire 600-year cycle of its existence.

Here we turn again to the theoretical heritage of I. Wallerstein. In his well-known books “The End of the World as We Know it” (Wallerstein, 1999), “After Liberalism” (Wallerstein, 1995) and a number of similar publications, he repeatedly suggests that the existing world-system is entering a long period of upheaval. By the 2050s,

this will lead to a complete change in the existing world order, as well as the entire complex of world-system relations. At the same time, he introduces the concept of a conditional “thirty years’ war,” which, in his understanding, is nothing more than a way of internal self-modification of the world system: changing the hegemon, restructuring the core, realising expansionist capabilities, etc. . In fact, we are talking about the very *world wars* mentioned above.

I. Wallerstein saw the main reason for the current world-system departure from the historical arena. It is the spatial-territorial limit achievement of world-economy expansion. which leads to a sharp decrease in the rate of profit. For this reason, the world community transition from financial-speculative to accounting-distributive principles has become possible. This means a transition to a new, fundamentally different, post-capitalist world-system.

So, following the I. Wallerstein’s logic, the world-system has gone through several phases over its 600-year history. These phases are marked by a change in certain world orders. In our interpretation, these are the Westphalian (1648), Paris (1763), Vienna (1815), Versailles (1919), Yalta-Potsdam (1945) world orders. Each of these world orders was established as a result of definite world (“thirty years”, by I. Wallerstein) war. The last, Cold (1946-1991), world war did not lead to the establishment of agreed rules for a new world order. The radically changed world continues to operate according to the old rules of the Yalta-Potsdam era.. This historical dissonance is intensified by the growing world-system crisis as a whole. All these are signs of what I. Wallerstein defined as the prerequisites for the next world “thirty years” war. He predicted the such development of events possibility back in the last century late 90s.

Following the methodology of world-system analysis, let us consider another aspect of global change. At a certain stage of its evolution, the world-system faced increasing blows from anti-system and counter-system ideas, political associations and even large international alliances. Let's follow the chronology. After the Great French Revolution, with its ideas of Freedom, Fraternity and Equality, appeared the first communist utopias, like of Fourier, Saint-Simon, etc. By the middle of the 19th century. these utopias were transformed into a system of political-economic ideas, that justify the inevitability of the capitalism death (K. Marx and F. Engels). By the end of the 19th century on basis of these ideas, arose social movements and political parties, uniting into the First and Second Internationals. In the twentieth century, the Russian socialist revolution took place, initially proclaiming a course towards a world anti-capitalist revolution. Was created the Communist International, and after the Second World War was proclaimed course towards the world socialism system building.

The capitalist world-system managed to cope with these challenges. It managed to assimilate and transform various anti-system ideas and movements into intrasystemic discourse, including social democracy, anarchism, “left” revolutionaryism, etc. Equally effectively, although in a more protracted mode (by the twentieth century 90s), it dealt with the socialist counter-system, led by the USSR with its satellites. However, in the first quarter of the 21st century, the world-system found itself in a “bifurcation zone.”

Several factors overlapped in this zone. These primarily include: a) the exhaustion of capitalist world-economy expansion spatial resources; b) deepening contradiction

between elite liberal and popular social democracy (Lachmann, 2020); c) increasing dissonance between the real 21st century geopolitics and the world order, which was formalized back in 1945; d) the counter-system trend resuscitation, embodied in the Chinese strategy of the “Belt and Road” and the globalist “Community of Common Destiny”.

The last factor deserves special attention. The fact is that China's current political hyperactivity is not only a consequence of its economic power awareness. There are much deeper motives here. Modern China sees itself today in at least three dimensions: firstly, as a revived Celestial Empire, into whose hands, centuries later, the axis of world history is returning; secondly, as the growing core of a new world-system, whose principles will be radically different from the current “aged” 600-year-old one; and thirdly, as the embodiment of Leninist idea of “shifting the center of revolutionary activity” to the East (Mitter, 2024).

If the first attempt, the revolutionary nature of Western Marxism, was neutralized and assimilated by the world system, if the second attempt, Leninist – Trotskyist kindling of the “world revolution fire” followed by Stalin’s construction of the “world socialism” system, was blocked and disintegrated, then the third attempt, - building a modernist “community of a common destiny” based on the experience of the total PRC technological revolution - may get its chance.

Apparently, China realizes that the world order, and, especially, the world system change cannot happen on its own. Is needed an energetic actor, capable to change the world-order and the world-system at all. At the same time, the PRC does not resort to old extremist methods of directly inciting a world revolution or world war. The Celestial Empire is trying to play on the “entire keyboard” of possibilities, including both its own strategic developments and the entire palette of international contradictions and clashes. It try to use them for her own aggrandizement (Krepinevich, 2023).

The Russian-Ukrainian war fits well into this Sino-centric strategy, which, together with the flaring up Middle East war and the pre-war situation around Taiwan, I. Wallerstein could well be regarded as elements of the new “Thirty Years' War”. In his works, the American world-system analyst has repeatedly pointed out that the final breakdown of the existing world order and the existing world-system will occur by the middle of the 21st century (Wallerstein, 2021).

As a result, one of three world order models may emerge from this chaos. In the first case, (if the current line of deepening the gap between the rich minority and the poor majority continues), a model of “technetronic fascism” will be formed, harshly forcing the social “lower classes” to ensure the prosperity of the social “uppers” in the face of further environmental deterioration.

In the second case, we are talking about a rigid multi-story distributive vertical, where everyone, in accordance with the rules of the service hierarchy, receives benefits in proportion to the quantity and quality of realized duties. Wallerstein characterized such a world-system structure as neo-feudalism or social-feudalism.

As the third model of the world-system future, I. Wallerstein sees the Brazilian city of Porto Allegri, whose leadership was headed by representatives of the Brazilian Workers' Party. The life of this city was built on the principles of social (not socialist) democracy, free from ideological doctrinaire, but aimed at the daily participation of citizens in all aspects of city life (budgeting, city management, ranging from popular discussion of city finances to detailed control over all stages of budget revenues

and costs) (Kingsley, 2012). All this is precisely the type of social democracy of the “bottoms” that I. Wallerstein contrasts with the declining liberal democracy of the “tops” (Wallerstein, 1995). I. Wallerstein did not exclude the coexistence for some period of the above listed (and even more) global future options.

Conclusions. The methodology of world-system analysis gives grounds to consider the Russian-Ukrainian war as an element of an extensive and deep humanity transformation, which (according to the forecast of I. Wallerstein and his school) will occur throughout the first half of the 21st century.

The logic of self-development of the world-system, which originated in the middle of the 15th century and exists to this day, includes, as an obligatory elements, world wars (in Wallerstein’s terminology, “thirty-year wars”).

These wars are catastrophic phases of the world-system’s periodical “upgrades”, the phases of changing its structural components and transition from the old to the new world order. There can be at least six such large-scale wars in the history of the world-system’s development: from the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) to the Cold War (1946-1991).

The tragedy of our time is that the flaring fire of local wars, in the center of which was the bloody Russian-Ukrainian war, is no longer associated with the upgrade of the existing world system. This is a sign of going beyond its limits and the beginning of some other story.

Is being formed the “bifurcation zone”, from which there can be three exits: a) complete annihilation of humanity as a result of a nuclear apocalypse; b) an endless chain of exhausting “hybrid wars” and sabotage between adherents of different versions of the world order; c) the “great renunciation” of the elites from their claims to world dominance and hedonism for the sake of working together with the common people to form a new world order, which in all its points will correspond to the vital interests of the vast majority of humanity, the interests of universal survival. The option looks, at first glance, utopian. But, if we think about it against the backdrop of the two previous hopeless options, the third one makes sense to be more attractive. There is simply no other options.

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РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКА ВІЙНА В КОНТЕКСТІ СВІТСИСТЕМНИХ ЗМІН ХХІ СТОЛІТТЯ: ДОСВІД МЕТОДОЛОГІЇ І. ВАЛЛЕРСТАЙНА

Резюме

Статтю присвячено розгляду проблеми російсько-української війни в контексті глобальних змін першої чверті ХХІ ст. Безпосередньою методологічною основою

дослідження є теорія світ-системного аналізу, методи історизму та компаративістики. Новизна статті полягає у порівнянні еволюції світ-системних процесів (середина XV – перша чверть XXI ст.) з динамікою світових воєн (від Тридцятилітньої війни 1618–1648 рр. до холодної війни 1946–1991 рр.). Автори висунули гіпотезу, що ці війни є тригерами саморозвитку світ-системи, фазами руйнування попередніх світових порядків і становлення нових. Кожен світовий порядок фіксує певний апгрейд у розвитку світ-системи. Це Вестфальський, Паризький, Віденський, Версальський та Ялтинсько-Потсдамський світопорядки. Системний збій у зміні світових порядків розглядається як одна з причин російсько-української війни. Звертається увага на те, що холодна війна, яка призвела до розпаду СРСР і змінила фактичний стан речей, тим не менше не закріпила ці результати в нормах нового світового порядку. Таким чином, сформувалася ситуація геополітичної невизначеності, чим і скористалася Росія.

У статті також обговорюється позиція І. Валлерстайна щодо «кінця світу, яким ми його знаємо», позначеного смугою військових зіткнень з усіма ознаками глобальної «Тридцятилітньої війни». У статті також розглядаються його сценарії ймовірного глобального майбутнього в «постліберальну епоху».

Ключові слова: світ-система, російсько-українська війна, світовий порядок, методологія, І. Валлерстайн, світові війни.