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Sustainable Overall Social Transformation: The Problem of Transition

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ABSTRACT: The paper is devoted to the interdisciplinary item of sustainable development. As follows from the argumentation, it is advisable to expose a concept of universal sustainability, which capturing on a whole the interconnected processes of sustainable changes in society, to the entire process of transformation of society as a social system. It can be named sustainable overall social transformation (SOST), the main criteria attributes of which are defined. In the near future applying described fundamental approach may open the door for ripen implementation the strategy of sustainable transformation at national and supranational levels. In this case the recognized goals/ targets of sustainable development (SDG), including those related to neutralizing climate deterioration, can be achieved at relatively acceptable costs for most modern countries.

KEY WORDS: National strategy, Public regulation, **S**ustainable development, Social system.

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The adoption of the framework integrative concept of sustainable development - Agenda2030 by UN in 2015 had a tremendous positive impact on the activities of the governments of many countries and various non-governmental organizations. In this regard, the proposed improvements to SDG indicators and individual provisions of Agenda can be of great applicable value (Report 2020).

The substantial feature of Agenda concludes in its wholeness in relation to all significant components of the social life. However, the problem of coordinating the decisions of social actors in various areas of sustainable development remains very relevant (Tosun & Leininger, 2017; Feola & Jaworska, 2019; Pham-Truffert et al., 2020).

To date, widespread opinion in public circles prevails in favor of the need to first neutralize the climate and the connected “burning” threats, and then only to apply the existing arsenal of means, models and methods to achieve another recognized SDG. However, a "stormy" solution of the climate problem is inevitably associated with tremendous costs, burdensome for existing national states, and huge collateral economic and social costs. This statement clearly corresponds with the modest results of the recent climate summit in Glasgow, on which great hopes were pinned.

In our opinion, the following argument is valid. The achievement of environmental improvements and relative climate stabilization depends on the expected integrative consequence of positive transformational shifts in all areas of social activity, concerning transformation of society as a consolidated social system (Martynov, 2019). Especially, the dependence of environmental and climate indicators on the efficiency of production and personal consumption of material resources has a great value. At the same time, what has been said, does not call into question the exceptional importance of public policy directly in the field of ecology and climate stabilization, objectively implementing in a relatively autonomous mode.

It seems reasonable to refer to the theory of social system transformation, relying on recognized outstanding contributions [Polanyi, 1944, Giddens, 1984, Luhmann, 1995]. The further logical step: to turn to the idea of universal or system sustainability, inherent to one degree or another in all social practices, and not only mediating the relationship between society and its environment (Giddings et al., 2002; Fisher & Rucki, 2017). The methodological approach based on this idea allows fully capturing the interconnected processes of sustainably reproducible changes in society. The well-known investigations of socio-ecological systems (SES) completely fit into the mainstream of the universal view of sustainability (Berkes & Folke, 1994; Ostrom, 2007; Partelow, 2017) as so as the integrative studies of sustainable development in main interrelated areas in the era of digitalization (TWI2050, 2018; Sachs et al., 2019; TWI2050, 2019).

The rest of this article has structured as follows. First, the criterion attributes of sustainable overall social transformation are outlined. By the author’s argument, these attributes correspond with core and structure-forming SDG in relation to other SDG. Then the sketch model of achievement of core SDG has specially highlighted. The further central part of paper contains discussion

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and suggestions for designing new national strategies concerning sustainable development and updated version of framework integrative Agenda in the near future. Conclusion presents in the last part.

2. THE BACKGROUND APPROACH

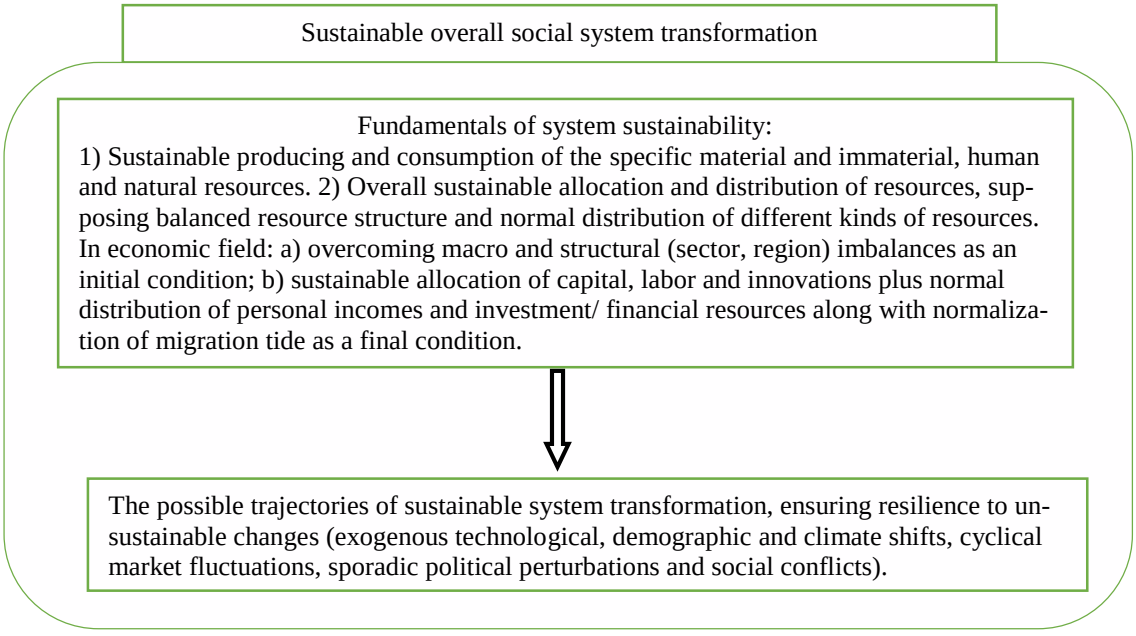
The author proceeds from the following initial vision. To a decisive extent, the resulting trend in the transformation of a social system has explained by indicators of production and consumption of resources (refer to SDG 2, 7, 9, 11, 12 in Agenda) and general/ macro indicators (now refer to SDG 8,10). Following the indicated approach, two unifying and interdependent criteria attributes for sustainable reproducibility within the entire social system can be defined as reflected in scheme 1 (Martynov, 2020).

The first of these attributes presents sustainable, essentially rational production and consumption of existing specific resources - tangible and intangible, human and, of course, natural, based on the recognized SDG in accordance with the Agenda. In addition to this, in the future, it will be advisable to incorporate new targets that predetermine the trajectories of sustainable production and consumption of structure-forming resources in their renewed composition. Consequently, the list of indicators for an implementation of the Agenda will expand, representing estimates of the degree of proximity to SDG (OECD, 2019; 2020 Comprehensive Review, 2020). In addition, the existing methodology for assessing a number of specific SDGs needs to be improved. The approach based on the updated life-cycle consumption theory seems as unambiguously fruitful (Future Earth, 2018; Annual report, 2020).

The second attribute concludes in the sustainably reproducible allocation and distribution of resources, incomes and capital at the macro and other levels of the system hierarchy in accordance with the existing criteria of progress. As applied to the economic field, this means a long-term spatial and temporal normality-balance of the main resource, material and financial proportions of output in the line of sustainable development. The same relates to the proportions of distribution, in particular concerning income inequality, as so as internal and external migration flows.

The criterion attributes or conditions of universal sustainability are called for predetermining the desired trajectories of overall social transformation. It can be named sustainable overall social transformation (SOST).

Scheme 1. **Sustainable overall social system transformation (SOST).**



The defined criteria attributes of system sustainability correspond with the core and structure-forming SDG in relation to all other recognized SDGs. Arguments in favor of this statement seem rather obvious, as if from the contrary.

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Thus, unsatisfactory approach to the goals of sustainable production and consumption, as well as to macro goals, actually makes it extremely difficult to solve most problems in the field of ecology and climate stabilization. The necessary burden on the state budget is too high.

Also, non-fulfillment of the core SAG is clearly associated with excessive material costs, investments and costs for the reproduction of human capital in order to achieve goals related to sustainable education, healthcare, cultural leisure, and even more so, purely humanitarian goals. In favor of what has been said, international cross-country comparisons indirectly testify. Thus, in Germany and Switzerland, in comparison with France and Austria, the degree of achievement of core SDG is significantly higher, which corresponds to a much lower budgetary burden on social purposes.

SOST design assumes adequate positioning in time and space of the required resource, institutional and organizational-behavioral shifts, taking into account the influence of relatively exogenous factors (technological, demographic and climate changes) and interactions on the "adjacent" fields of social action. Along with this, among the possible alternatives, it is necessary to choose transformation trajectories proceeded from the condition of adaptation as resilience to the objectively unsustainable changes (Gallopin, 2006, Folke, 2016). They include exogenous technological, demographic and climate changes, cyclical and other market fluctuations, sporadic political upheavals, and multiple social conflicts. The problem of neutralizing the impact of instability in the future has recognized as central in the course of making strategic decisions and implementing regulatory mechanisms with the participation of specific actors (Transformation towards, 2018; OECD, 2020).

Thus, a turn towards sustainable transformation of society as a social system presupposes the fulfillment of the conditions for sustainable reproduction with simultaneous adequate resilience to the drivers of possible unstable changes through the purposeful actions indissolubly connected with public regulation. The process of transformation of a social system, characterized by the property of this kind of adaptation, can include incremental and discrete, uniform and uneven changes.

3. ACHIEVEMENT OF CORE GOALS

Sketch framework model of achievement the core, specific and macro, goals of sustainable overall social transformation at national level has reflected in the volumetric scheme 2. Let me focus on only three comments.

The first comment. Following the transformation paradigm, the achievement of sustainable conditions concerning allocating and distribution of resources in an entire social system presupposes its substantial qualitative transition in time and space relative to the initial position. Such a transition is inevitably associated with relative changes in the root institutions of ownership and coordination, the main resource, price and financial proportions, as well as organizational structures. In turn, these structure-forming system shifts are designed to act as drivers for the implementation of specific SDG in accordance with Agenda.

The second comment. Proceeding from the system notion of overall social transformation, in any country the approval of SOST is fully realized only if supranational - geopolitical, economic and status - transformations will take place in accordance with the conditions of sustainability in the main fields of social action.

The third comment. The initiative role of corporate business, as well as independent small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in achieving sustainable production and consumption has no doubt. Also, it is difficult to question about the significant and positive contribution to sustainable progress that Eco-system business (ESB) is already making, operating on the principles of equity and transparency. However, the significance of public regulation in achieving specific SDGs, especially outside the borders of market sectors, remains paramount.

It is worth noting to highlight the following thesis. Active and simultaneously flexible public regulation for fulfilling the system sustainability has designed to help reduce entrepreneurial and investment risk, thereby stimulating positive initiative decisions of market and social entrepreneurs. Judging by the existing experience in a significant number of countries, the leading corporations and other successful enterprises are able to achieve the best market results in line with their long-term strategy, the cumulative effect of which will not violate the acceptable sustainable proportions of output and distribution. Such opportunity can be realized if an adequate macro, structural and regional long-term policy has implemented to ensure adaptation to exogenous changes - technological, demographic, climate, as well as the alignment of corporate and other entrepreneurial strategies with the government strategic course in accordance with the principle of compromise Nash-type equilibrium (Martynov, 2021).

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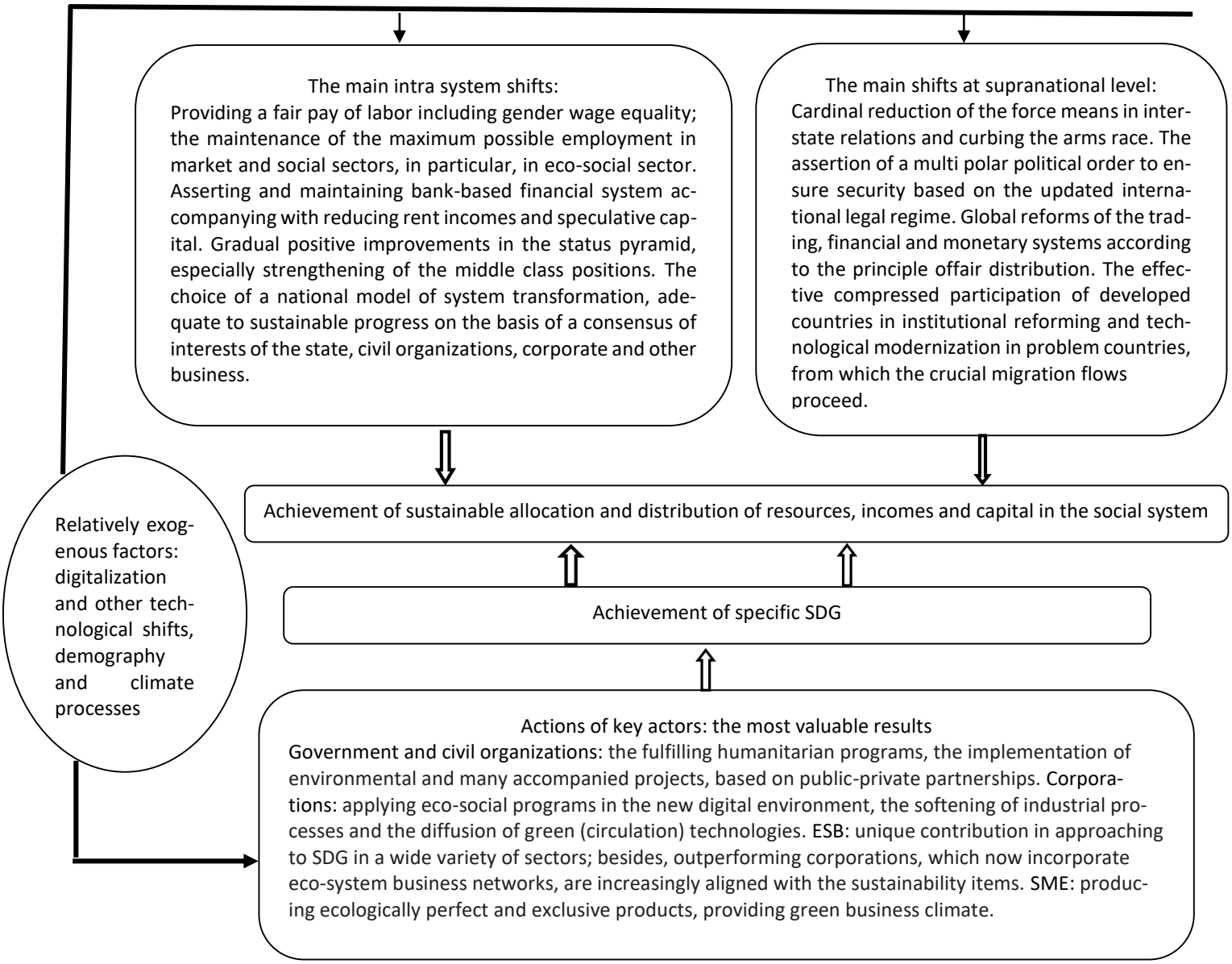
Scheme 2. Drivers of achievement the specific and general goals of SOST at national level: sketch framework.



One can propose that due to such initiative decisions in the future the paths of transformations by economic and social sectors in increasing degree will meet the well-known optimality criteria in line of sustainable national development. From one side, the criteria for improving well-being in its broadest sense, including the state of the human environment, reflected by internationally recognized quality of life and human development indices, as so as the happiness index (subjective well-being). From other side, the criteria of rationality and efficiency of capital movement in its various forms (including natural capital), taking into account the relationships between generations. Proceeding from this criterion, the preferential result of the social system transformation in any country presents the constant growth of the national economy competitiveness (The inclusive growth, 2017).

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4. DISCUSSION: THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY. TOWARDS NEW NATIONAL SD STRATEGIES ALONG WITH THE FUNDAMENTALLY UPDATED VERSION OF AGENDA.

In many countries during the Pandemic, there was a serious regress in terms of approaching to the imperatives of sustainable development. At the present time, after the recession of the Pandemic, there is a need for radical, not at all evolutionary shifts in all the main areas of sustainable development within the social system of a definite country. Such a system change becomes possible only on the basis of identifying significant causal links between all SDG indicators.

The currently leading approach to the study of sustainable development trends, in particular, presented in the recent resonance publications (Sustainable Development Report 2021 and The World in 2050 Innovations for Sustainability), causes a critic. An unambiguous link to the heterogeneous 17 goals and the corresponding 169 targets of Agenda2030 leads to a fragmented vision of the economic/ social transformation of any country from the standpoint of overall sustainability. Researchers face the virtually insoluble problem of operating with a huge set of heterogeneous indicators, the relative significance of which cannot be objectively (non-subjectively) assessed. Therefore the main issue about the degree of approximation of national development to the trajectory of sustainable transformation factually remains out of sight.

Following the previously formulated argument, it is advisable to restructure the SDG, at least in five consolidated groups. The first group is represented by specific goals / targets for the production and consumption of resources. The second group - target macro benchmarks for sustainable allocation and distribution of resources (material, intangible, monetary in the form of income and capital), moreover, satisfying the accepted balance conditions. Environmental and climate indicators make up the third group (refer to SDG 3 (partly), 13 - 15 in Agenda). The fourth group covers indirectly measurable goals / targets of sustainable development of social, over economic significance (refer to SDG 3 (partly), 4, 11 (partly), 16 - 17 (partly)). Finally, the last group includes non-measurable, purely humanitarian indicators (refer to SDG 1, 16 - 17 (partly)).

Along with this, the incorporation of additional macro goals/ targets will be of crucial importance. They can be represented by indicators of the distribution of financial resources and capital, employment potential, the size of the labor migration flow. Partially, these indicators, it is worth to highlight, present in the updated German strategy for sustainable development (German Sustainable Development, 2021)

It is reasonable to hope that the consequence of automation and digitalization will display in the achievement of a system synthesis of information at different levels and, thereby, a cardinal weakening of information flaws in most segments of market and other entrepreneur activities. Then in the future it seems expedient to incorporate into the SDG set a key (from a standpoint of the national programming) indicator of long-term potential output, including in the sector and regional context. Indeed, this indicator adequately reflects the conditions for sustainable allocations of resources with respect to the main factors of output (productive capital, labor and innovation) and demand, taking into account the real market parameters: incomplete elasticity of wages, relative price rigidity, etc. (Martynov, 2020). An equally important further step concludes in the incorporation of fork indicators of sustainable income and capital distribution, determined on the basis of the preferential influence of distribution processes on long-term potential output and its main components.

It should be noted that a particularly important problem concludes in ensuring the balance of a new composition of macro indicators for sustainable development. There will be a need to apply an improved procedure for their matching. This procedure has long been verified in the EU (Alert Mechanism Report 2022, 2021; Statistical Annex, 2021). It is definitely expedient to borrow such practice in other countries.

The proposed approach makes it possible to reflect the causal links between the SDG, which must be taken into account for designing future SOST. Then, to the fullest extent, such design will constitute an organic component of the forecasts / programs (plans) of national economic and social development in accordance with the internal logical sequence of their evaluation.

The restructured composition of the SDG can directly present in the national strategies for sustainable development, thereby increasing the level of their reliability. Such operational strategies can be fully coordinated with long-term investment and budget financing programs in certain areas of sustainable development.

Currently, national strategies of sustainable transformation are accepted in a few countries (Germany, Switzerland and Canada). However, their number may increase significantly in the coming years after curbing Covid-19, taking into account at least the preparation of voluminous national reports on the implementation of the SDG in wide range of countries.

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At first place, concerning national strategies, a fundamental expansion of macro indicators measuring the degree of sustainability of distribution processes is required. In addition to the traditional indicators of income differentiation (Sachs et al., 2019, German Sustainable Development, 2021), it would be fruitful to incorporate indicators of structural changes in the composition of total capital (in particular, the share of rental capital), as well as indicators of migration tension and regional gaps.

In regards to individual countries, substantiation of realistically feasible progress in the main directions of SOST can become the most important preliminary stage in the development of a long-term national strategy. Judging by international experience, it is definitely advisable to fix the benchmarks of sustainable transformations within the framework of a system development strategy for the entire society. It makes sense to emphasize the fact that long ago sustainable development goals/ targets had incorporated into the 13th - 14th five-year national plans of China [China's Progress Report, 2017; China's 14th Five-Year Plan, 2021], as well as in 11th - 12th Malaysia plans [Malaysia, 2017; Twelfth Malaysia Plan, 2019] and in recent Taiwan plan (National development plan, 2021).

At the same time, it is worthwhile to remain realistic. In the visible future important directions of the national strategy may involve the implementation of purposefully accelerated and non sustainable transformational changes. In particular, in today's realities, the design of a military-political strategy in most countries is called to be carried out without orientating at sustainability criteria.

The new national strategies for sustainable development can be supplemented by updated version of the Agenda. Apparently, the question about this updated version has timely posed in relation to the future 10-year period; perhaps to the near relevant period (2026-2035).

Similar to national strategies for sustainable development, a radical expansion of the composition of macro goals/ targets in the Agenda is required. Moreover, taking in view public interest it seems advisable directly to incorporate targets (relate to SDG 10) in reducing the level of income differentiation in the form of recommended ranges as forks into the updated Agenda.

The formulation of target (10.5), concerning the regulation of financial markets, clearly needs improvement. It is necessary to emphasize the regime of solid monetary and financial policies, supplemented by the neutralization of illegal / criminal economic activity and the anti-corruption course on a stable legal basis.

Besides, a need for the incorporation of additional target in reduction in the level of economic development between countries, especially between the poor and developed, should fulfill. In our opinion, the time comes directly to fix the imperative of achieving a just international economic order as an additional target of the Agenda (regarding SDG 8). This order assumes an unhindered stable trading regime, as well as stable regimes of international capital movement in its various forms and labor force, operating on the base of the coordinated application of global, regional and national legislation.

5. CONCLUSION

The successful experience of the Transition to a sustainable overall social transformation in the leading countries will inevitably encourage its spreading in other countries. In the case of consistent, step-by-step implementation of sustainable overall social transformation strategy at national level, the desired SDGs, including those related to neutralizing climate deterioration, can be achieved at relatively acceptable costs for most nation states and the entire world community.

Of course, it would be unreasonable to indulge in the illusion of perfectionism regarding the prospects for sustainable transformation of modern countries and, moreover, of the entire global society. Amid the aggression against Ukraine acute international conflicts seemingly present an integral part of world development in the near future. They are fraught with the most devastating consequences, including a sharp deterioration in the dominant indicators of sustainable development.

Nevertheless, there is reason to hope that in the case of consolidation of the progressive forces in modern countries, the time of global confrontation will end sooner or later. Then the way to approve the sustainable overall social progress will open, although conjugate with overcoming the very significant obstacles and curb of the contractions by "dark" forces. Another positive alternative has not given.

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