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# INTRODUCTION

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## GLOBALIZATION IS CHANGING THE WORLD LANDSCAPE

The transformations of this rapidly changing world are too fast for our perceptions to follow them and our institutions lag behind. The changes are numerous and sometimes indicate considerable global progress. One of the major changes that have recently become evident due to the 2008 crisis is the shifting balance of world forces. Today most analysts forecast the diminishing influence of the United States and the West in the coming decades. At the same time we witness a growing economic power of a number of developing countries. Thus, first, some rearrangements are inevitable in the world ranking of countries; and second, there are signs of major changes in developing countries. The consequences of these changes will be extremely significant. (Aspects of these issues are analyzed in Leonid Grinin's paper 'The Tiger and The Dragon' and in Andrey Korotayev and Victor de Munck's contribution 'Advances in Development Reverse Global Inequality Trends'.)

Globalization has greatly changed the situation. Fifteen years ago (at the height of the Asian crisis and resulting collapses in Latin America, Russia and other countries) there was an active debate that globalization was widening the gap between the countries' development levels. And today we speak about fast growing Asia and developing countries as the most dynamic segment of the world economy while Europe and the USA stagnate and drag the world economy into recession. No matter what the opponents of globalization think, but it is 'globalization' that makes the peripheral countries catch up with the core, although it seems that a real convergence is still a distant prospect. Nevertheless, it is in the global South where in the coming decades one can expect a rapid growth of the middle class, income levels, and higher education.

That is the reason why the first section of the present special issue is entitled *Asia Rising*. Nowadays many Asian countries are rising: from Malaysia to Laos, from Bangladesh to Vietnam. However, here we consider the two leading countries: China and India. More than one third of the world's population lives in these countries and in the future their influence will be even greater than today. But still each of them faces its own serious problems, growth constraints and various threats.

The contemporary world is full of contradictions and the inequality remains one of the main problems, both global inequality and the domestic one which creates tensions in most countries, whether developed or developing. The second section *Capitalism and Globalization* is devoted to the analysis of different aspects of this problem. Capitalism has always been a society with institutionalized inequality. However, in the last decades it has become very important to constrain its manifestations.

The modern world is changing rapidly due to the scientific discoveries and new technologies. It is not so long ago that we were all frightened by the threat of global warming but in recent years the climate, on the contrary, is getting colder. We were all concerned with the problem of coming shortage of energy resources but at present the USA exuberate over the possibility of bringing down the oil and gas-producing countries by developing shale gas and oil production. It is quite possible that these technologies are overrated but nevertheless the U.S. shale gas and oil production as well as renewable energy production has rapidly grown in recent years. These considerations should be added to John Urry's paper 'Carbon Capitalism and the Problem of Energy', which does not take into account the opportunities of new technologies. Urry thinks that the danger of the global shortage of energy resources will continue to grow and will negatively affect world development.

The final section *Reflections on Globalization* is devoted to the comprehension of globalization. When analyzing its numerous issues, it is impossible to ignore the problem which is currently urgent both for the developed and a number of developing countries (including China) and sooner or later will be topical in every country. This is the problem of population ageing. Jason Powell and Hafiz Khan's article 'Ageing and Globalization: A Global Analysis' is devoted to this issue. Chumakov offers a general perspective on globalization and the final paper of this section and the special issue ('Globalization is Learning by Doing: Global Studies Conferences & Global Reforms' by Jan Nederveen Pieterse) discusses ways of comprehending globalization. It discusses the problems of global reforms and, in addition, the organization of annual Global Studies conferences which have become an important part of contemporary introspection. The article is particularly relevant since the present special issue is largely composed of papers based on the presentations made at Global Studies conference held in Moscow in cooperation with the Faculty of Global Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University in June, 2012.

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