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► **To cite this version:**

Leonid Grinin, Ilya Ilyin, Peter Herrmann, Andrey Korotayev. Introduction. How Global Can Be Global Future?. GLOBALISTICS AND GLOBALIZATION STUDIES Global Transformations and Global Future, 2016, 978-5-7057-5026-9. hprints-01794202

HAL Id: hprints-01794202

<https://hal-hprints.archives-ouvertes.fr/hprints-01794202>

Submitted on 7 Jun 2018

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Introduction. How Global Can Be Global Future?

*Leonid Grinin, Ilya Ilyin,
Peter Herrmann, and Andrey Korotayev*

Globalization processes continue to develop and we should pay more and more attention to them. We also need to systematize our ideas about globalization and Global Studies to somehow fit the realities. We hope that our Yearbook contributes to the realization of this goal.

The present volume is the fifth in the series of yearbooks with the title *Globalistics and Globalization Studies*¹. However, why Globalistics, not Global Studies? Elsewhere we explained that the notion of Globalistics first appeared in Russia, this is a translation of the Russian term *globalistika*; however, we believe it might be useful within the English Global Studies thesaurus. We are sure that the introduction of this term is meaningful, because it expresses the vision of systemic and epistemological unity of global processes, the presence of a relatively autonomous field with its own research subject. Morphologically this term is identical with such well-established designations of academic disciplines as Economics, Linguistics, Physics, and so on (for more details see Grinin, Ilyin, and Korotayev 2012b, 2013b, 2014b).

In all the issues we strive to describe the leading process of the present-day world – globalization – in all the aspects and dimensions. Furthermore, we have to note that globalization is not only – and we suppose not primarily – about interconnectedness of economic activities in a narrow sense (trade, value chains of production *etc.*). More relevant in the long term is the alignment of ‘lifestyle’, in some cases as a matter of directly influencing each other and assimilation; in other cases as matter of setting a principle of orientation that is aligning the various processes into one long line of big historical development, creating a world order. As such it goes far beyond the World System be it one of 500 or 5000 or even 10000 years (see Frank and Gills 1993/1996; Grinin and Korotayev 2009b, 2014b). Instead, this constellation is now not about dependencies but about a new stage of union of opposites and contradictions. Though always present throughout history, the mutual dependency is now emerging for all actors as a somewhat conscious strategic moment which includes the interpenetration of the different life worlds. This means as well that paradoxically the principally retard of the socio-political dimension of the process gains in part and temporarily a dominant position: life and living follows rules for which the economic conditions are still emerging. The periphery itself is increasingly shaped by the characteristics of the centre and, vice versa, the ‘Brazilianisation’ becomes prevalent and visible and moves into the middle of the societies of the centre.

¹ For the earlier issues see Grinin, Ilyin, and Korotayev 2012a, 2013a, 2014a.; Grinin, Ilyin, Herrmann, and Korotayev 2015.

The subtitle of the present volume is *Global Transformations and Global Future*. We become more and more accustomed to think globally and to see global processes. And our future can all means be global. However, is this statement justified? Indeed, in recent years, many have begun to claim that globalization has stalled, that we are rather dealing with the process of anti-globalization. Will not we find ourselves at some point again in an edifice spanning across the globe, but divided into national apartments, separated by walls of high tariffs and mutual suspicion? Of course, some setbacks are always possible, because the process of globalization cannot develop smoothly. It is a process which is itself emerging from contradictions and is shaped by a new contradiction. They often go much further than underlying systemic changes allow. They break forward, as the vanguard of a victorious army, and then often meet resistance of various social and political forces and may suddenly start to roll back just at the moment when everyone expects their further offensive. We believe that this is what is happening with globalization at present.

The problem is that there is a great disproportion between different dimensions of globalization that creates great tensions. To diminish these disproportions it is necessary to closely merge the socio-political component of global change (political globalization) with the narrowly understood economic dimension (for definitions and paradigms of globalization, see Andreev, Ilyin, and Zinkina 2015). Obviously, the latter is far ahead of the former. And further development would be difficult without such a catch-up. Yet, the narrowing of the gap between economic and political globalization is inevitable and we denote this process as a reconfiguration of the World System (see Grinin 2013; Grinin and Korotayev 2012; Grinin, Ilyin, and Andreev 2016).

The major vectors of this reconfiguration include weakening of the former core of the World System (the USA and the West), and simultaneous strengthening of the positions of a number of peripheral countries and a generally increasing role of the developing countries. However, one should bear in mind that the 'catching up' (between the political and economic components of globalization) will also bring severe political and geopolitical crises in different regions. Elsewhere we have considered the crises and turmoil in the Middle East after 2010, as well as the Ukrainian crisis as both 'reconfiguring' and geopolitical crises which require transformations in the world order. At the same time, grave and probably unexpected crises in other societies or regions seem rather possible. Their abruptness may be akin to earthquakes. And to continue the geological metaphor, one should note that just like the tectonic shifts occur under the most mobile Earth's crust and at the boundaries of tectonic plates, the reconfiguring crises occur in the least stable regions and societies which are situated at the junction of geopolitical 'plates.' Both the Middle East and the Ukraine are regions of this kind. Nevertheless, many of the ruptures are also visible in other areas – actually for instance in the different aspects of European disintegration, reaching from anomie of political legitimacy and Brexit to xenophobia.

We also argue that stability or instability of the world order depends on the stable or fragile character of the balance of power. The current balance of power obviously undergoes some transformations. If the suggestion of the weakening role of the United State is correct, what would the shift towards a new balance look like? We assume that one of probable scenarios is the creation of various alliances between countries to strengthen their positions and increase opportunities. As we have seen, this process has even involved the United States, usually reluctant in taking over different commitments. Thus, the search for a new balance of power has already started and it will be manifested in a more active crea-

tion of various alliances and coalitions of countries and their associations. We denote this process as an epoch of new coalitions (Grinin 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013; Grinin and Korotayev 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014a, 2015). This process of reshuffling brings up the issues of the loss of power, or may we say that the crumbling away of the hegemonic role is not least a matter of the dissolution of the ‘American dream’ and the ‘American lifestyle’. The suggestion that ‘another world is possible’ is not limited to alter-mondialists but it is equally prevalent in the emerging economies as for instance the BRICS and Latin America. How strong these movements will be is still an open question. But at least they clearly show that the strive for a new hegemonic system is going far beyond the claim of a new dominance on the world market.

Against this background of the different layers of change we believe that the political future of our planet will be still and even increasingly global, but the path to the future will take different route and it will be increasingly coined by global turbulence and instability.

The First Part of our yearbook is devoted to the field of Big History. What is Big History? Big History is a vast and extremely heterogeneous field of research, encompassing all forms of existence and all timescales, bringing together constantly updated information from different scientific disciplines and the humanities. The unique approach of Big History has opened up vast research agendas, taking a variety of forms. This discipline weaves together various disciplines into a single narrative where interdisciplinary work is not only possible, but essential. As has been mentioned on a number of occasions, the rapidly globalizing world needs global knowledge that can explain a unified global system (about Big History see Hughes-Warrington 2005; Nazaretyan 2005; Spier 2005; Christian 2005; Carneiro 2005; Markov, Korotayev, Grinin 2009; Grinin, Carneiro, Korotayev, and Spier 2011; Grinin and Korotayev 2009a; Grinin, Korotayev, and Baker 2014). Thus, we may say that globalization itself becomes propulsion for Big History.

The Second Part is devoted to the issues of global demography and the articles pay special attention to the global ageing which constitutes one of the most powerful trends of the modern world and that will change our world dramatically in the forthcoming decades.

The Third Part includes articles dealing with various aspects of globalization and international politics.

Finally, the last part (Part IV) is devoted to two topics: climate and energy which both are the sources of anxiety. How fatal can be climate change for humanity? Will there be enough energy for our descendants? What will be the energy of the future? We hope that our yearbook articles will help readers better understand these challenges and possible responses to them.

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