

FOREWORD

Is the era of globalisation at its end? The decline of the Washington Consensus has been in the zeitgeist for years now – but what is next in line? A multi-polar liberal world? A withering of the institutions of post-World War II stability? A retrenchment of regional spheres of influence – a central power for each jealously enforcing its will?

The past few years have seen many challenges to the age we had come to know – the globalised world. A pandemic closing borders and wreaking havoc on long-taken-for-granted global supply chains. A trade war and tensions over Taiwan laying bare the myth of ‘Chimerica’. Nationalists challenging democracies from within – from ‘illiberal democracy’ using the power of the state to benefit the regime in Hungary, to a violent attempt to annul an election in the USA. A revanchist Chinese leadership asserting its will over Hong Kong and cracking down on its own global commercial brands lest they challenge the domestic central government. The QUAD, AUKUS, and IPEF drawing new lines in strategic defense and trade. A fracturing internet – a once-aspired global commons of ideas being broken down into nationalist islands controlled by authoritarians. Most dramatically, an upending of international stability, law, and peace in the Russian invasion of Ukraine – leading to a reinvigorated NATO, a stalemated and sidelined UN Security Council, and the beginnings of a newly defined Europe in the European Political Community.

What are we to make of all of this? What does it tell us about the future of the global order we had come to know? How can social sciences make sense of this transformation?

As this journal enters a new era itself, we aim to thrust ourselves into this conversation. Using our bases in international law and international relations, we seek to understand this new era – and to contribute to finding solutions to the problems that come with it. In this issue, we range from a discussion of the possible future paths for globalisation and global institutions in a changing world order (‘Globalisation by Other Means? Hegemonic Continuance and Rising Powers – A Framework of Analysis’), we analyse the rise of India and imagine a post-colonial world order (‘India and Decolonising the World Order’), we talk about the changing definition of sovereignty in the transnational age (‘Governing Transnationalisation and the Transformation of Sovereignty’), we discuss the relationship between autocracy and development (‘Exploring Overdeveloped Post-Communist Autocracies’), and examine the complicated role of social media in localised response to a global pandemic (‘Co-Creating Community-Based Solutions Through Social Media in Estonia During the COVID-19 Pandemic’). In so doing, we hope to shed light on some of the many research challenges that lie ahead in this sudden age of uncertainty.

The old certainties of the post-Cold War age have faded – and one might argue they only existed for a privileged few even in that time. The future that will be built upon their ruins is still to be decided – and we appreciate you joining us at East-West Studies in undertaking that construction.

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