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**BOOK REVIEW:
THE WORLD TRANSFORMED – 1945 TO THE PRESENT**

Zuzana Husárová*

HUNT, M.: *The World Transformed: 1945 to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 601 p. ISBN 978-0-19-937102-0.

Current developments in the world, our economic, social and cultural possibilities are all together creating one of the most amazing periods in the whole history of humankind. We are witnesses of a turbulent progress since the post-war years, when countries are looking for their place and independence within increasingly interdependent world of states, organisations and many different international platforms influencing all aspects of everyday life. In order to name these powerful changes, the word globalisation was adopted, however, with no clear definition or boundaries. What exactly means this transformation process? Where are the boundaries after which we are speaking no longer about globalisation, but about new world order? Where is the end of an economic boom giving welfare to an unprecedented number of people on the one side, but deepening the gap between rich and poor on the other? These and many other questions implied by contemporary development are concerns of Professor Emeritus **Michael H. Hunt** in his recent publication *The World Transformed*.

As written in the preface of this publication, the highest ambition of an author is to share a sense of the drama and importance of the contemporary history, which are “essential to understanding the place humans have created for themselves” (Hunt, 2016, p. 15). With this, very genuine, aim in mind, the book supposes to overcome traditional views of the already published surveys when introducing dramatic changes over the past decades.

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Because of the author's ambition to explain all of the major trends and changes shaping current world and its development, the content of this publication is divided into five main parts, which are supposed to reflect these movements. Each of these parts is comprised of several chapters, what actually helps readers to find concrete topics and issues in which they are interested.

The first separate part of the book is called *Introduction: The 1945 Watershed*. As indicated by this name, the goal is to explain relations and complexity of the post-war world. Second World War and its destructive power is illustrated on a vivid examples extracted not only from generally known facts about deaths and economic deprivation, but also on atmosphere among people. Yes, it was a period of struggling, where literally much of the world was in ruins, but, on the other hand, there is no other era with stronger sense of hope and better future. There was no deeper bottom than the existing situation, and that changed people's attitude from deprivation to challenge. To change something was not an option, it became a must. Such transition, naturally, implies creation of new world order defined by two leading powers - the Soviet Union and the United States on the one side, as well as still stronger calls for independency on the another one. Stability and facilitated economic renewal were challenged by rising discontent within the decolonising countries, as well as by the new generation questioning inevitability of the war.

From my point of view, this part of the book really fulfils its aim. It is written in a very understandable and remarkable style, where author is often appealing on attention and understanding of his readers. Although many scholars and theorists of International Relations are interested primarily in the political aspects of described events, Professor **Michael Hunt** dedicated his attention also to the economic and geopolitical dimensions, thus helping to create a complex critical viewpoint on presented era.

Hopes and fears contend, 1945 – 1953 is the name of the second part of the publication. As suggested by the defined years, the content of this part is focused on the new post-war situation reflecting intensifying tensions between Soviets and Americans. Previously awoken hopes for peace and prosperity were in this period replaced by fears and danger of future conflict. Author visibly summarised key events and presence of the so-called "pactomania" on many maps and tables, which were added to the text. In addition to that, an economic dimension characterised by the renewal of prosperity is described in the second chapter of this part. Author summarises mainly American economic activities, which were characterised by enormous success, and which actually created

new foundations for deeper economic relationships with the rest of the world. All of this is complemented with a description of events happening in the “Third World”, where author is focusing mainly on China, Korea, Vietnam, India and the Philippines. Social unrest, evident even during the last war years, was a vivid space for creation of new calls for independence of these regions that, building on their western manners and educated minorities, started to negotiate and seek for compromises, preserving colonial powers from the further growth.

Another independent part of the book is dedicated to *The Cold War System under Stress, 1953 – 1968*. The decades of rivalry between leading superpowers of the world are characterised by easing of international tensions – Soviet Union after Stalin's death and United States recovering from the Cuban Missile Crises both needed time to handle their internal situation. In such atmosphere, the world had witnessed a miraculous economic recovery in Western Europe and Japan, having a paradox effect on Americans. They started to criticise post-war economic order, where the golden age of individual prosperity was replaced by the high governmental spending aimed to preserve political status instead of paying rewards to its citizens. Low saving rates together with competition from other developed countries began to diminish relative power of the United States. Again, the text is complemented with a description of the situation in the Third World, where authorities started to adopt Marxism as an answer to all questions arising from their colonial past. The single-party model with no imperial exploiters was the only ideology promising stability, equality and no outer threats to the countries struggling for new structure of state institutions and independent representatives.

Next, fourth part of *The World Transformed* is called *From Cold War to Globalization, 1968 – 1991*. As indicated by the name, it gives an outline of the final phase of the Cold War, where the policy of compromises and so-called “détende” replaced open anxiety and competition between Soviet Union and the United States. This conclusion, as a result of austere thinking, had created a vivid space for deepening of globalisation processes instead of confrontation. An implication of this transition was a creation of three global economic centres – North America, East Asia and the EU. While these needed to cooperate, each of them applied different rules and procedures on how the economy should function. As Professor **Michael Hunt** noted, when one party tried to universalise rules at odds, such effort resulted in growing tensions that slowed down the trend of global integration. Such development simply forced countries and their representatives to find their new hierarchical status within the political map of

the world. Moreover, revolutionary impulses in the developing world (mainly in South Africa, Israel, Guatemala, etc.) based on their unity and nationalism, complicated smooth development towards unified world.

The last, fifth part of the book is dedicated to the most recent events shaping face of the world. It is called *Integration and Fragmentation, the 1990s and beyond*. Such indefinite timeframe suggests that the processes of globalisation and the transition of interconnected world are still ongoing, with no concrete due date. Author focused his attention to the major challenges the world is facing today – from environmental changes, new diseases and severe poverty on the one hand, to the modern technologies and neoliberal attitude on the other hand, which might be perceived as a threat for balanced development of all world regions and countries. This part of the text is different from the rest of the book, because unlike the previous parts, there is no conclusion. The author leaves an open space for individual assumptions and thinking based on described issues and challenges of modern society.

An overall assessment of *The World Transformed* is positive. In addition to complexly described events and issues defining post-war development of the world, the whole text is enriched by special features ranging from illustrational photos to very comprehensive tables, summaries of used academic terms, and maps driving attention of readers. However, in this regard, I also have to say that the topic itself is not very specific. An author attempts to cover all areas of the global transformation, but it is not possible to cover all specific details and explicit facts within one general publication. Consequently, the reviewed publication is therefore a great contribution providing general knowledge and understanding about globalisation processes our world had undergone, but for any further researches and professional publications it needs to be enriched by providing more concrete facts and titles focused on specialised issues.