

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the *Asia Research Journal* (ARJ). The ARJ is an academic journal which publishes papers in the fields of business, management and economics, social sciences, arts and humanities, engineering, education and related subjects. It is my hope that the journal will make a contribution not just to academic knowledge but to harmonious cross-border relations at a time of complex international relationships.

Deglobalization

1. What Is Deglobalization?

The Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on February 24th, 2022 was met by a raft of sanctions of Russian institutions, firms and individuals on an unprecedented scale. Individuals who were thought to have a personal connection with the Putin regime and to have benefited from it were considered 'oligarchs' and considered to be valid attempts for sanctioning. Yachts were seized, travel restrictions were imposed and Chelsea football club, recently crowned FIFA Club World Cup champions, was prised from the hands of its owner. One consequence of this is the further dislocation of supply chains that had first been affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. However, while the disease posed what was widely thought to be a temporary disruption to global trade, the Russian war started to make people think this would be a permanent ending to globalization. In his annual letter to shareholders of BlackRock, which has \$10 trillion dollars in its portfolio and is the world's largest asset management company, Larry Fink wrote: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to the globalization we have experienced over the past three decades.' He predicted that "... companies and governments will also be looking more broadly at their dependencies on other nations. This may lead companies to onshore or nearshore more of their operations, resulting in a faster pull back from some companies." (Masters, 2022).

Fink sees the war, in other words, as an external environmental shock of such severity that it might lead to a radical restructuring of the global economy and the creation of another international division of labour. Firms would be making decisions based on relative costs but with a more prudent re-evaluation of the nature and extent of risk in the system. However, the sanctions have provoked another response and another direct threat to globalization. D'Eramo (2022) wrote: "... what has been damaged is faith in globalization itself and hence the very formulation on which it's built. A globalized economy rests on the assumption that its overall order is more important than the contingencies of individual states. Capital can only move freely between banks in different nations if it is equally secure in any given institution. As such, globalization is based on the conviction that there are no national elites, but rather a single, global one that is invulnerable to the vicissitudes of state politics." This understanding of the world, that the global elites will be permitted to behave in any way that they wish and can dispose of their numerous assets according to their precise ideas has been required to have a radical rethinking. There were plenty of reasons for those involved to believe that their immunity to the usual laws would continue – Bullough (2022), for example, has provided a devastating critique of the ways in which British institutions have accommodated the needs of overseas capital, notably Russian capital, in finding safe havens overseas in a conducive environment where people might want to live and bring up their relatives and connections. Yet the threat to the interests of the global hegemon has trumped those of anyone else. Consequently, we may see some rolling back of globalization for reasons of realpolitik. However, although there may be some expulsions from the system, the system itself is likely to be reconfigured in a similar style though on a slightly smaller scale in due course. The fiendish complexity of global value chains means that it would be fearsomely difficult and expensive to abandon them altogether. However, most arguments for deglobalization aim for just such a radical rupture, in one form or another.

There are three principal arguments that have been put forward for deglobalization and these tend to overlap and interact with each other in various ways. The first argument depends on equality and decolonization – owing to the depredations of the past, it is now not possible to conceive of a globalized world which does not continue to reinforce existing power structures that are inherently unfair and exploitative. There is a variation to this argument which places the act of exploitation and the drive for inequality into the present and the future rather than the past. The second argument depends on the threat of global climate change and environmental degradation, which is being driven to a considerable extent by the instruments of globalization, the planes and ships and factories that make hyper-consumption possible and the ideological instruments of capitalism that drive the desire to participate in such a society. The third argument adopts ethical and aesthetic approaches and insists that smaller is better for its own sake. This argument for degrowth is controversial on many grounds and is associated with some unpleasant side-arguments but it should be considered nevertheless. In this introductory chapter, a summary of these arguments will be provided. However, before seeking to understand what deglobalization is, it is necessary to understand the nature and scope of globalization and that will be presented next. Following these sections, the introduction will describe the nature of the other chapters included in this book and consider their contribution to the overall debate.

2. Globalization

Deglobalization is the process that reverses globalization – and globalization is the process or set of processes that lead to similar patterns of production and consumption spreading around the world based on a paradigm of increasing efficiency resulting from economies of scope, scale and learning. Although a powerful wave of globalization is associated with the creation and functioning of imperial systems by mainly European colonialists, the current form that it takes results from the changes brought about by the collapse of the Soviet system (1989-92). The end of the Cold War saw the majority of those people who had been part of Communist command economies switched to some form of the capitalist economy. This greatly increased both the potential pool of labour that could be drawn upon to participate in low labour cost intensive manufacturing. It also led to a significant increase in the number of future customers for those manufactured items. With large increases in both supply and demand factors, it is not surprising that world trade has flourished in the years since then (although with exceptions at time of global economic recession and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic).

The movement of manufacturing and assembly work to countries with low labour costs preceded the end of the Cold War but were intensified by it. The concept of the New International Division of Labour had already been identified in the 1970s (Fröbel, Heinrichs & Kreye, 1980) and the Japanese economy had already reached the stage that domestic labour costs made production there unprofitable compared with the possibility of offshoring to Southeast Asia (Kang & Piao, 2015) and, later, China. As an East Asian country, Japan shared some cultural assumptions and similarities which enabled its companies to integrate themselves more smoothly into the overseas markets than their European and North American rivals were able to do. Perhaps the most significant spur to globalization was the decision of the Chinese government under Deng Xiaoping in 1980 to adopt the Open Door policy as a means of strengthening the economy. This policy welcomed foreign businesses wishing to establish themselves in a specified number of special economic zones (SEZs), which were mostly located in coastal areas (Bohnet, Hong & Müller, 1993). The policy proved enormously successful: most of the world's largest companies were keen to open operations in China so as to gain access to the country's more than one billion consumers; many thousands of Chinese workers were keen to work in the SEZs where the wages available were greatly in excess of what they might achieve by remaining in the agricultural sector. Since many workers were unable to transfer their official residence via the *hukou* system (HRW, 2008), they were vulnerable to harassment and exploitation and this prolonged the period of low labour cost competitiveness up to and beyond the Lewisian point of equal supply and demand for labour. One result was that hundreds of millions of people were lifted out of poverty in one of the most spectacularly successful economic experiments of all time.

Yet globalization has a definite negative element – more than one element, in fact. The impact on the natural environment of the endless desire to increase productivity has been intense and possibly ruinous beyond repair. The evidence of widespread exploitation and abuse of workers is extensive and the primacy given to the mobility of capital over labour has led to the systematic spread of this model further and further across the world, as spatial fixes (Harvey, 2001) are brought into play to avoid the trap of falling profitability. More and more people question the sustainability of this system and whether it could and should be reversed.

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This is the beginning of the introduction to Deglobalization: The Future of Growth in the International Political Economy, which is an edited open access volume available at: <https://www.prouden.com/book/deglobalization-the-future-of-growth-in-the-international-economy/>. To read the rest of the introduction, please visit: <https://jcwalsh.wordpress.com/2023/01/25/introduction-to-deglobalization-the-future-of-growth-in-the-international-economy/>.

The Seemingly Inevitable Demise of the Irrawaddy Dolphin in Myanmar

A second Irrawaddy dolphin calf – *Orcaella brevirostris* – was spotted in the River Mekong at Cambodia's Kratie province in March of 2021 (Phnom Penh Post, 2021). Nine were spotted the previous year and 13 in the year 2019. There are perhaps 92 of the animals in the 118-mile (190 km) stretch of the Mekong between Myanmar and Lao PDR. Every year, since reliable records began, between 2-6 dolphins are found dead (Aung, 2019). There are thought to be 72 dolphins in the eponymous Irrawaddy (Ayeyawaddy) and more

in the Ganges and the Mahakam river in upland Borneo. There may be as many as 300 living dolphins worldwide (World Wildlife Fund, 2021).

The Irrawaddy dolphin has a reputation for intelligence, as well as its appealing smiling face and it is reputed to work in partnership with local fishing people, by indicating where fish may be found in the river. Since the dolphins are reasonably predictable in their movements, attempts have been made to create a sustainable community-based tourism business to support them at six villages which are part of the Dolphin Conservation Centre and located in Mandalay division and Kyaukmyang in Sagaing.

Unfortunately, the attempt has not been very successful because reaching the designated villages requires extensive travel on unimproved roads, the accommodation and catering are very basic and the local people not always very welcoming – the women of the area tend to be restricted to their households and fear and dislike the dolphins themselves. Furthermore, logistical difficulties make an excursion much more expensive than for alternative trips and there can be no guarantees that the dolphins will be ready for a rendezvous anyway (Walsh & Zin, 2019).

Unfortunately for them, Irrawaddy dolphins cannot be trained to do tricks or swim with minders and so cannot claim asylum at international aquariums or dolphinariums (Tun, 2020).

The precarious numbers of dolphins means that the loss of even one individual can provoke a crisis for all and it is not known at which number the entire population will become unsustainable. Annually, as many as half a dozen animals are killed as a result of fishing with electricity, which some Myanmar fisher people use as a deadly approach to any living thing that may happen to be in the water. Attempts to persuade the fishers to use less lethal means to the by-catch and, generally, to monitor the dolphin population has been made much more difficult because of the coup of February 1st earlier this year and the armed resistance which is now opposing it in most parts of the country. Needless to say, the country's small but important international tourism sector has been almost extinguished because of recent events, not least of which is the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. More than 150,000 cases of COVID-19 have been recorded in the country and more than 3,000 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021) but, given the lack of technical capacity, equipment and resources in most regions, the real numbers will be much higher. It is difficult to be optimistic about whether the situation will be brought under control in the foreseeable future.

What is clear is that conflict restricts people's ability to maintain a decent standard of living and, as a result, it is to be expected that people will take whatever means they can to supplement the food supply for themselves and their families and so more dolphins will die. This is in addition to the continuing menace to wildlife construction of dam construction, which acts to restrict the habitat of riverine dolphins and interferes with food chains (Sotheary, 2020). Fishers also use mines, poisons and illegal nets. Since local people have little incentive to rush to tell authorities about the death of a dolphin, when a corpse is discovered, it may no longer be possible to determine the cause of death given the resources available in the field (The Irrawaddy, 2020).

The impact of global climate change is also evident in the area and the deleterious impacts on wildlife of some of the special economic zones in the area are starting to be brought to light (Tong, 2021). The Tatmadaw, the Myanmar military force, might even be a direct threat to the dolphins since former dictator Ne Win was said by some to have bathed in dolphin's blood in the belief that it would grant him supernatural powers (History Answers, 2015) and these beliefs appeal to many high powers in the military. It is certainly the case that the fighting that followed the coup of 2021 has rendered many environmental protections moot and the issues of animal care considered less important amidst the ongoing human tragedy.

Given the scale of the tragedy of human suffering to be found now in the country, it might be argued that the loss of a few animals is not that important. However, the seemingly inevitable demise of the Irrawaddy

dolphin in Myanmar is not just a symbol of the country's rulers destroying the country's future but a genuine additional threat to the environment.

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This Issue

In this issue there are four double-blind peer-reviewed academic papers and five edited book reviews. The geographical scope of the authors ranges from Nigeria in the west to China in the east. The subjects include education, finance and religion. Academic papers in any of the disciplines taught at the International College of Krirk University will be eligible for consideration in the journal, which includes engineering, business and management, economics, arts and media, communication studies, political studies, public health and science and technology. Please feel free to contact the editor (dr.john.wal@staff.krirk.ac.th) for any inquiries.

About Krirk University

Krirk University is one of the most reputable universities in Thailand. It was founded in 1952 by Dr. Krirk Mangkhlaphrik and has been promoting higher education in the country since 1970. At first, it used the Ratchadamnoen Building. Krirk was upgraded to university status in 1995.

Dr. Krirk was a renowned educator both in Thailand and abroad. He received an honorary doctorate in education from David & Elkins College, USA. Owing to his high competence in teaching English, his high-level pedagogical skills and work experience, Dr. Krirk decided to establish a university dedicated to teaching English. He became known as the first Thai person to teach modern English aimed at students wishing to understand the principles of the language so that they could use English effectively. Consequently, the institution was licensed as a “Language and Professional School.” However, most people knew it as Dr. Krirk’s School. Nowadays, the university has become well known for teaching Chinese as well.



Krirk University today is organized into several reputable faculties and colleges, including the Faculties of Business Administration, Liberal Arts and Law, the International College, Political Communication College and China International Language and Culture College.

Furthermore, the President of Krirk University, Professor Dr. Krasae Chanawongse, is one of the most famous people in Thailand. He has served in various prominent positions, such as the Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister of University Affairs, Minister to the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister of the Ministry of Public Health. He received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1973.

Many faculty members of Krirk University have contributed to both the public and private sectors. For example, Krirk researchers have helped surrounding communities solve problems, while lecturers have taken important roles in other universities or organizations.

The Alumni of Krirk University have made distinguished contributions in the political, social and education spheres. We have such successful alumni as Dr. Chalermchai Sreeon, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives; Dr. Kanokwan Vilawan, Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana, Secretary to the Minister of the Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Sira Jenjaka, Member of Parliament for Bangkok and Mr. Mario Maurer, the famous actor.

Krirk University has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with hundreds of higher education institutions in China. The university also signed an MoU with Mahidol University of Thailand to promote education.

Krirk University consists of professional and highly qualified instructors. Thai and overseas faculty are both knowledgeable and experienced and teach at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. There are now 129 full-time faculty members and 540 part-time instructors. Of these, 56 full-time faculty members are PhDs and 406 part-time teachers are PhDs. Furthermore, 46 full-time faculty members are from overseas, as well as 470 part-time teachers. Lecturers at Krirk University have received the “Role Model of the Year in Education and Social Development” award. They share their knowledge with students and introduce them to new skills.

Krirk University educates both Thai and international students. There are currently 1,172 full-time undergraduate students and 461 part-time students, as well as 1,193 full-time graduate students and 284 part-time students. Of these, 305 full-time undergraduate students from overseas and 1,076 full-time graduate students are from overseas. Krirk University provides an excellent learning environment for students. The modern teaching equipment and the supportive and stimulating environment really help students to learn and to develop their personalities. Students learn from diverse cases and situations, so they can develop critical and creative thinking skills and become able to study and work independently, work with others and work efficiently in any circumstances.

In 2022, Krirk University was awarded 5 stars by QS Stars and considered an excellent university. It won prizes for its performance at international conferences. The university is ranked 5th best in Thailand and 149th in all of Asia.

John Walsh, Editor