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BOOK REVIEW

Peter Zeihan, *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization, 2022.*

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Peter Zeihan is an American geopolitical strategist and expert. He owns *Zeihan on Geopolitics*, which was established in 2012 offering customized consultations for its clients. Zeihan's analysis focuses on the interplay between demographics and geography. He studied how a country's geography impacts finance, economics, and politics and how it influences culture and military development. He has written bestseller books, including *The Accidental Superpower*, *The Absent Superpower* and *Disunited Nations*, and the latest *The End of the World Is Just the Beginning: Mapping the Collapse of Globalization*.¹

The book was published in 2022 by Harper Business, predicting the future as a deglobalized world without a secure and safe trading system, which the Americans enforced after World War II. Each country and region will have no other alternative but to grow its food, manufacture its goods and manage and obtain cheap energy sources. The countries have to retreat from the global competition and protect their domestic industries. They have to battle the shrinking and ageing population in most developed countries. Only a few countries will be able to subdue these coming crises, which will engulf the whole world, and America is one of them.

The book is divided into seven sections; each section offers a view of the past and connects the future through the present.

Section I is *The End of an Era*, where Zeihan explores the chronology of establishing the new system after WWII and how America was in a position

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¹ Visit <https://zeihan.com/meet-peter-zeihan/>.

to hegemonize the world. However, with industrialization and urbanization, the world's demography is rapidly altered to a point of no return.

Section II is about *Transport*, examining the development of modes of transportation from antiquity with the Roman road network, waterways, rails, and roads to the modern, sophisticated world maritime system connecting the divided world in a global economy. But all this was only possible because of the Americanized global economic trade system. According to the author, without international naval trade, the operations of the countries will collapse with manufacturers and consumers.

Section III on *Finance*, deals with the global financial situation, highlighting different economic paradigms like the Asian financial model, the Euro model, and the American model with global dollarization. It also indicates the consequences of the collapse of demography and the decline in the labour and consumer markets on the current economic standards.

Highlighting the *Energy* is in Section IV, where the value and future of modern energy and its alternatives are discussed in length. The contemporary world reached its pinnacle because of the excessive burning of fossil fuels-oil and natural gas. All of this was possible due to the globalized American-managed supply chain system. Entirely switching to any Greentech is not simply possible yet; it requires massive infrastructure and, most importantly, geography.

Section V, *Industrial Materials*, addresses the worldwide supply and demand system and fair access to markets under the American international order. Following rapid industrialization and urbanization, several countries solely depend on mining and exporting different industrial raw materials. In future, refining and manufacturing will depend on cheap power and transportation availability. A drop in the demand will lead to the crash of major world economies.

After these illustrations, Zeihan argues about *Manufacturing* in Section VI. Modernistic manufacturing involves the supply chain, process, variant labour market, workforce and technology. The diminishing of the country's population will affect the mass production. Also, the states with regional connectivity will flourish; the longer the supply chain, the more complex disruption will be.

The last section, Section VII, is on *Agriculture* and shifts in the forthcoming years. Large-scale food production and supply chains were only achievable by industrial-level agricultural technology and cheap and reliable industrial transport options. Under globalization, most countries specialize in producing non-food products and rely on a few agrarian countries, who are fulfilling the global demand for products rather than facilitating local needs. In the hyperspecialized agricultural period, only some countries adequately produce food, leading to global food insecurity and severe risks of famine.

The twentieth century was marked by the American century, the world domination of the United States in political, economic, and cultural terms. After the devastating two world wars and millions of deaths, Europe and its Imperial powers were torn apart. They needed an external actor to unify and provide financial assistance and security to the region. The US was a guarantor of world peace with its superior military power and economic dominance. It created global-scale security and commerce decrees to contain the Communist Soviet Union. Most countries joined the US order, which turned the global oceans into one gigantic, safe, navigable waterway trade route. The rapid urbanization and industrialization of the nations led to development and economic expansion but simultaneously dropped the birth rates. It is a uniform global phenomenon where financial growth hurts population growth. The minus population density is one of the reasons that anticipate the collapse of the modern globalized structure.

Peter Zeihan couples the post-COVID world, falling demography and crushing globalized economy. He points out the evolution of a deglobalized and deindustrialised world, where the current system will be disrupted with a decreased flow of goods, services and capital. It may be triggered by the American withdrawal from the security system or because of the demographic collapse in the world, which will ultimately break the supply links worldwide. The exit of the US from the system will have a domino effect on the order. The international bulk trading system, which is faster, cheaper, and safer, was workable due to the presence of the US. That includes the accessibility of fossil fuels, where oil is used for transportation and natural gas for electricity generation; the world cannot survive without them. A lack of ample supply will lead to inflation, and our current economic system is not decent enough. In the absence of the US steering the decentralization of geopolitics, along with the demographic inversions and technological

transformations to automation, many of the jobs today will cease to exist in the future.

The unwinding of globalization does not suggest returning to a pre-industrialized position. Instead, in a post-globalised world, demographics, transport and geography will play a central role, and only some have the chance to survive this apocalypse of deglobalization.

Zeihan quoted lines from T.S. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men* (1925) in the epigraph, setting the tone of the book. "*This is the way the world ends Not with a bang but a whimper*", Eliot wrote in the aftermath of World War I, a time of great disillusionment and existential anxiety. We are also facing the same circumstances; our current world (system) will not terminate because of some devastating event but maybe by a simple withdrawal from the system under Protectionist policies.