THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE IN 2026: ADAPTIVE RESILIENCE, STRATEGIC FRAGMENTATION AND NEW CONSUMER PARADIGMS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the key vectors of transformation of the global economy by 2026. It substantiates the phenomenon of adaptive sustainability, in which the stabilisation of macroeconomic indicators is accompanied by a deepening of structural gaps. It examines the transition from globalisation to strategic fragmentation of trade flows, where regionalisation and protectionism form a model of "partial interdependence". Particular attention is paid to the dual fragmentation of the consumer landscape caused by growing inequality and the influence of Generation Alpha, which is shaping demand for immersive and collaborative forms of consumerism. The conclusion formulates a strategic imperative for business: the need to simultaneously work with contradictory trends through adaptive scenario planning and precision data analytics.

By 2026, the global economy will demonstrate adaptive resilience, overcoming the consequences of previous shocks not by returning to past models, but through structural restructuring. The projected growth of global GDP at ~3.0% [1] masks a profound transformation driven by trends: the transition to 'strategic regionalisation' of value chains [4], the steady rise in production costs, and the demographic polarisation of consumer demand initiated by Generation Alpha [7]. The success of corporate strategies will depend on the ability to work in parallel with fragmented realities.

The stabilisation of key macroeconomic indicators (inflation, interest rates) is not a sign of a return to pre-crisis norms, but rather indicates the formation of a new, less integrated and more costly configuration. 'Sustainability' is achieved through costly business adaptation: duplication of supply chains, accumulation of buffer stocks, and localisation of production [2, 5]. While ensuring stability, this model simultaneously restrains potential growth rates and creates permanent inflationary pressure, especially in the raw materials sector [1].

Trade flows are being restructured according to the principle of 'ideological and regional proximity' rather than pure economic efficiency [5]. The United States is demonstrating a model of 'focused protectionism,' deliberately sacrificing import volumes (-1.7% in 2026, forecast [8]) to stimulate reshoring. Contrary to expectations of large-scale deglobalisation, China retains a key role in high-tech exports (share in world trade ~14.2% in 2026 [3]), as the creation of alternative production clusters takes decades [5]. This creates a 'world of partial interdependence' where de jure declared autonomy coexists de facto with deep integration in critical industries.

Double fragmentation of the consumer landscape. Markets are splitting along two axes:

1. Socio-economic. Growing inequality (the Gini index has worsened in 49 out of 103 countries [10]) is leading to the parallel existence of hyper-budget channels and a market for premium goods with ethical positioning (25% of global consumers are ready to boycott brands [6]).
2. Demographic and value-based. Generation Alpha (~2 billion people by 2026 [7]) is driving demand for 'immersive and collaborative consumerism,' where value is created not in the product itself, but in the experience of integrating it into digital narratives, which is transforming traditional marketing [9]. Conclusion. The strategic imperative for 2026 is management at the intersection of contradictions. Corporations are forced to simultaneously: a) increase operational profitability in the face of high costs in mature markets, b) aggressively scale up in developing economies with high demographic dividends [2], c) create flexible, digital-physical consumer ecosystems for the new generation [7, 9]. Key competencies are becoming adaptive scenario planning and precision data analytics, which allow for the segmentation not of markets, but of behavioural realities within a single geographical area..

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