

Towards a Global Society: Utopia or Dystopia?

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In Chapter 2 we explored the concepts of globalization (the objective world-wide processes of integration) and globalism (the subjective awareness of living in 'one world'). The extent to which these two processes have advanced remains contentious and besieged by uncertainties. Some anticipate that globalization and globalism will be sufficiently vibrant phenomena to usher in a new global age and to promote the construction of a generally benign global society. However, this view is strongly contested by other scholars. Those who are overtly hostile to many aspects of globalization on moral grounds are best described as 'critics'. Others, best regarded as 'sceptics', believe that many of the features described are exaggerated or overstated. In this chapter, we will consider four areas of controversy where the critics and sceptics seem to be making useful points – even if we disagree with them either in detail or in terms of the general thrust of their arguments. Then we will turn to the elements we have identified as constituting the building blocks of a global society. We can anticipate the conclusion to this chapter by indicating that while we do not yet see a fully assembled structure of a global society, we already see the bricks and mortar that are making that construction happen.

declining and, if so, in what sense. We do not need to repeat those arguments here, although you will see that this issue overlaps with several other key questions. The views of critics and sceptics with respect to the remaining areas of contention are best summarized in the form of four propositions, which we state here, before elaborating them and providing a critique:

1. 'Economic globalization is nothing new.'
2. 'A materialist culture will engender uniformity and disempowerment.'
3. 'A clash of civilizations will lead to cultural conflict and violence.'
4. 'Globalization will lead to a dystopian future.'

'Economic globalization is nothing new'

Certainly international trade is not new. As the leading economy for much of the nineteenth century, Britain's imports of raw materials rose by a factor of twenty between 1800–75 (Dunning 1993a: 110). The development of the commercial steamship from approximately 1850 along with the telegraph transformed trade opportunities rapidly in the last decades of the nineteenth century by reducing the previously prohibitive costs and risks involved in the movement of people and bulk goods. Moreover, since competition is intrinsic to capitalism Britain and its emerging industrial rivals – the USA, Germany, France and eventually others – increasingly sought to export finished goods to each other's markets.

These countries also required reliable supplies of foodstuffs, raw materials and fuels for their expanding home markets and growing populations. This need for raw materials led to the scramble for captive colonies, imperial conquest and the division of the world into rival spheres of trading interests, which each country then tried to monopolize. The net result of all this was that by 1914, on the eve of the First World War, a highly internationalized global economy had already emerged. Indeed, Hirst and Thompson's (1996: Chapter 2) boldest claim is that it was hardly less internationalized and open than the current world economy.

A similar case has been made for transnational flows of capital. Thus, direct foreign investment (DFI) by established home companies grew rapidly from about 1870. According to Dunning (1993a: 116), by 1913 it had obtained an importance, proportionately, in the global economy that was not reached again until the mid-1950s. From about 1870, DFI also increasingly supplemented the investment role played by portfolio investment (where finance raised in a home country is used to acquire share-holding interests in a foreign government's or company's own projects rather than directly owned and managed businesses). Moreover, compared to today, where the developing countries receive only about 20 per cent of DFI, before 1913 such flows were much more geographically dispersed – with two-thirds of the total directed to the colonies and dominions, especially Britain's (pp. 117–18).

So, the basic argument made by these critics is that economic globalization is nothing new and nothing special. However, there are several good reasons for doubting whether the world economy *was* as open and integrated before the First World War as during the last four decades. Consider the following:

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1. Far fewer countries were involved in international trade and DFI as main actors. For example, as Hirst and Thompson (1996: 22) concede, between them Britain and Germany supplied over half of the world's manufactured exports in 1913.
2. According to Dicken (1992: 27) whereas in the first quarter of this century only eight countries supplied 95 per cent of the world's manufacturing output, by 1986 the number producing this same share had risen to twenty-five.
3. Similarly, before the First World War only a handful of countries were significant overseas investors. One country, Britain, provided the lion's share, with 45 per cent of the world total including both portfolio investment and DFI.
4. By contrast, the TNCs headquartered in many more developed countries are now engaged in DFI (for example, Italy, Canada, Denmark, and Switzerland). Their counterparts in the developing countries (including India, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico) have also become significant sources of capital flows.
5. Measured in terms of volume, both international trade (from the 1950s) and overseas investment (from the 1960s) increased dramatically and soon dwarfed the corresponding amounts for any previous era.
6. According to Dicken (p. 51), the average number of subsidiary manufacturing plants established overseas each year between 1965-67 by the largest TNCs was over ten times greater than at any point in the period from 1920-29 and nearly seven times higher than in the years just after the Second World War.
7. The lion's share of the capital outflows through DFI before 1914 (about 75 per cent) was invested in such a way as to facilitate the export of raw materials, especially from the former colonies. Very little, only 15 per cent, was directed towards manufacturing and most of this was located in Europe, America, Russia and Britain's dominions. By contrast, the shared DFI going to raw material procurement by the seven largest capital exporting countries had fallen to 25 per cent by the mid-1970s (17 per cent in 1988) while overall DFI in manufacturing – much of it in technologically sophisticated activities – reached 42 per cent by 1975 (Dunning 1993a: Chapter 5).
8. The share invested in services – especially those relating to business such as banking, insurance and trade distribution networks – has also risen considerably from only 15 per cent in 1914 to 47 per cent by 1988 (Dicken 1992: 59). This huge increase has contributed to furthering the market penetration of manufactured products.
9. The arguments comparing international trade in 1914 to the present period miss the point that each country's trade (imports and exports) and the capital flows it experiences associated with outward and inward DFI are fast becoming indistinguishable (Julius 1990). This is because their integrated, global operations compel TNCs to engage in intra-firm exchanges. A good part of a country's official declared imports and exports actually consist of the cross-border movement of components, semi-finished goods, production-related services and other 'products' between the various subsidiaries of foreign and locally based TNCs.

Assessment of proposition 1

Although we readily accept that there were high levels of international trade in the period just before the First World War we do not believe this significantly dents the argument that we are witnessing a new era of economic globalization. For one thing, prior to 1914 and for several decades after, states were driven by overt and strongly nationalist pressures towards protecting their home economies while seeking to dominate overseas spheres of imperialist influence. But protectionism and imperialism have been declining rather rapidly since the 1950s in most countries. Also, in terms of scale, complexity, the number of actors involved (both state and non-state) and the integration of finance, manufacturing, services and investment, the economic globalization of the last three decades has gone well beyond anything that existed in 1914.

It is sticking our necks out a little also to argue that the national rivalries that preceded the two world wars cannot easily happen again. With many more players, free flows of capital, images and ideas and a more complex and overlapping mesh of transnational networks it is difficult to see how the nation state can haul the weapons of protectionism and nationalism out from their armouries to the extent they once did. Of course, as we have accepted throughout the book, globalization impacts very differently in different parts of the world and there is strong evidence, discussed in our last chapter, that localisms of all sorts are on the move again. However, most of the manifestations of religious and ethnic sentiment are happening at the sub-national level. Where ethno-nationalism has been successful, as in the post-Soviet states, the élites of most of the emerging countries are rushing headlong for global integration, not protectionism. The political and financial crisis in Russia late in 1998 and the political crisis in Serbia will propel a partial reverse to this process. But the former Soviet satellites in the Baltic and Eastern Europe are firmly in the global market economy and it is unlikely that Russia can disengage in any meaningful way.

Although Hirst and Thompson's work (1996) was a welcome reminder of the extent of earlier periods of economic integration, the title of their book, *Globalization in Question*, clearly overstates their case. It may be that they can convince you that economic globalization is in question – although we challenge their account on that too – but they understate the crucial point that globalization is about so much else other than economics. Social and cultural factors are ignored. So too are the transmission of shared images through the media, the rise of new 'power containers' (like the global city), and the development of transnational social networks and global politics (like diasporas and social movements). As we hope we have demonstrated, all these and much more are all part of the phenomenon of globalization.

'A materialist culture will engender uniformity and disempowerment'

Another anxiety for those who fear the emergence of a global society, is that everywhere people increasingly experience an ever more bland condition of sameness. Sachs (1992: 102) puts it dramatically when he says 'the homogenization of the world is in full swing. A global monoculture spreads like an oil slick over the entire planet'. Until recently, the overwhelming force for universaliza-

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tion in world affairs was the western-inspired view that progress meant greater humanism and international peace linked to the spread of science, the creation of a unified world market and the pursuit of material improvement for all.

In the days of formal imperialism and colonialism such views enabled the West to legitimize its mission to impose its culture and its political and social institutions on much of the world. The 'trade-off' for the colonized was access to new markets and new commodities. Now the promise of 'one world' achievable through material progress is being replaced by the more disturbing image 'one world or no world' (p. 107) because of impending environmental catastrophe. Such pressures towards universalization are dangerous because they destroy the world's diversity of languages and cultures and undermine people's sense of local identity. If these are lost then the confusion and conflicts this may engender could disempower us in our attempt to solve global problems.

Other writers see the main threat of homogenization coming from the global marketplace led and often controlled by American business. Along with this comes the all-pervasive and seductive imagery peddled worldwide through media influence, also largely monopolized by America. This is the now familiar 'McWorld' of consumer culture and its brand-name icons – Levi 501 jeans, Coca-Cola, Reebok trainers, fast foods including the famous McDonald's burger itself – that are now desired even by the world's poorest inhabitants living in slums and rural backwaters. Sklair (1995: 174, 280) argues that once established, capitalism invariably engenders a powerful and understandable popular appeal among ordinary citizens that is very difficult to counter or replace with a fairer democratic socialist alternative. Other alternatives are thereby precluded. Meanwhile, even those lucky enough to afford to participate in consumerism will ultimately experience dissatisfaction. This is because consumerism cannot cater for people's additional needs for community involvement, personal development and meaningful social relationships. It also brings growing environmental damage (see Box 18.1) to the point where it is difficult to see how the biosphere can remain viable unless limits are placed on the global pursuit of economic goals.

Barber (1995) also fears that the 'McWorld' market system will lead to the standardization of cultures and consumption practices and these, in turn, will bring yet other dangers. For example, the TNCs raise people's expectations through advertising by encouraging consumers to believe that their purchases open new avenues to a better life of opportunity and freedom. Yet most products are quite unable to deliver the kinds of personal self-fulfilment promised in the adverts.

The purchasing power for consumer goods is no substitute for secure employment opportunities, strong community values or the ability of citizens to influence the political process through democratic institutions. Accordingly, the vista of abundant market choice holds out promises it cannot keep. In fact, the TNCs have no interest at all in improving people's real lives or encouraging the strengthening of civil society. Neither do they intend to promote the kind of meaningful transnational solidarity that might empower global citizens to cooperate in overcoming common problems.

Assessment of proposition 2

We share many of the anxieties raised by the writers just cited. Certainly, it would be foolish to deny or ignore the enormous influence exerted by the

Major Concepts

HYBRIDITY

Hybridity refers primarily to the creation of dynamic mixed cultures. Sociologists and anthropologists use the expression 'syncretism' to refer to phenomena have long observed the evolution of commingled cultures from two or more parent cultures. Using the term to describe culture and other cultural expressions of colonized peoples, Bhabha (1983) introduced a new twist to the idea. He saw hybridity as a transgressive act challenging the colonizer's authority, values and representations and thereby constituting an act of empowerment and a

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TNCs over all aspects of our lives. However, although the dangers posed by TNCs and by the spread of capitalism are formidable, the concrete evidence for suggesting that together these produce an irresistible, disempowering and homogeneous culture dominated by American consumerist values is often more apparent than real. Indeed, as has been seen in Chapters 12 and 13 on tourism and consumerism there are powerful grounds for arguing that under capitalism consumers retain far more opportunities for personal creativity and autonomy than these arguments suggest. Moreover, as in the past, the arrival of unfamiliar goods, ideas or artistic forms generally enriches rather than narrows the local repertoire of cultural resources by extending the opportunities to express indigenous 'traditions' and lifestyles. In such situations people exercise selectivity and consciously mix the old with the new to create alternative and **HYBRID** forms.

Increasingly, too, this process of cultural borrowing and mixing works in reverse since western societies are increasingly absorbing a widening range of cultural experiences from the non-western world. This is readily apparent in a range of activities stretching from culinary, musical and artistic ones to practices and philosophies associated with health, sport and methods of business organization, to name but a few. Neither does the evidence so far bear out the contention that non-western peoples have no defences – and wish to have none – against the onslaught of Americanized material culture. Much depends on specific circumstances such as the degree of support governments provide for local cultures, the details of colonial history or the intrinsic strength of national economies. Sometimes, it is not westernization that poses a threat to cultural survival, but the discriminatory and centralizing policies imposed by dominant religious or ethnic groups on small minority cultures.

'A clash of civilizations will lead to cultural conflict and violence'

We have already discussed Barber's views (1995) on the likelihood of 'McWorldism'. In fact, his arguments on this topic are also relevant to proposition 3 because he observes that many ethnic, religious and national groups around the world are diametrically opposed to the individualistic, materialist hedonism embodied in American consumerism. Indeed, he believes that we are witnessing a growing worldwide resurgence of organizations enflamed with a mission to pursue various kinds of Jihad (the Islamic version of a holy war), sometimes involving the use of terrorist and genocidal violence. In many instances these can be interpreted as direct responses to what such groups perceive as the threat of Americanization and its trivialization of ancient, unique cultures, or the revealed truths originating in divine inspiration. Thus, we appear to be confronted with two scenarios: (a) an unequal but relatively peaceful world where the poor majority are kept in a state of passivity by a promise of the future acquisition of consumer goods; and (b) a dangerous one of contending, fundamentalist warrior causes.

The conservative American writer, Samuel Huntington (1993), appears to go much further than Barber in forecasting a future consisting of cultural and even actual bloody wars between rival civilizations. His argument can be summarized as follows:

1. Certainly, it exerted by the

1. A 'civilization' consists of the broadest level of cultural identity shared by clusters of ethnic groups, nations or peoples based on common experiences, especially history, religion, language and customs. On this definition there are perhaps seven or eight such civilizations in the world today although each contains important sub-divisions.
2. In the post-Cold War era, neither ideological conflicts, as for example between communism and capitalist democracy, nor the struggles between nation states will continue to shape global politics to the same extent as in the past although the latter remain as very powerful actors. Rather, future conflicts will increasingly develop along the 'fault lines' (p. 29) between civilizations – sometimes exploited by political leaders and groups as a means of enhancing their own interests.
3. Chief among such confrontations may be that between the West, now at the zenith of its global leadership and power, and a coalition of non-western civilizations probably focused around an Islamic–Confucianist axis. The countries drawn together within the Muslim and East Asian civilizations are rapidly increasing their military capability either through imports or by developing their own arms industries linked to industrialization.
4. What binds these and other non-western civilizations together – although much also divides them – is a shared resentment concerning the West's past. They see the West as continuing to impose its version of modernity on the world and to use its current control of international institutions such as the World Bank and the UN to further its own interests. Western concern to prevent the spread of military capability and arms, especially nuclear weapons, to the rest of the world can be readily understood against this background.
5. Several worldwide changes are working to accelerate and intensify this growing sense of 'civilizational consciousness' (p. 25). However, the most powerful of these are probably linked to globalization and modernization, especially the increased interactions between different countries and cultures arising from time–space compression and the yearning gap created in people's lives by the resulting loss of local identities. This gap is increasingly being filled by the revival of various forms of religious and cultural fundamentalism.

Assessment of proposition 3

One of the difficulties with Barber's theory is that not all fundamentalist groups are opposed to consumerism and material prosperity – such values are, for example, embraced by most American revivalist churches. Moreover, many Islamic fundamentalist groups, whether active terrorists or Iran's ruling ayatollahs, are highly ambivalent in their attitudes to modern materialism. They revere the past, but are dependent on advanced technology in order to fight their cause – from faxes, the Internet and television to jet travel and sophisticated armaments along with the market systems that provide them (Hadar 1993).

Moreover, the desire to reject American cultural domination constitutes only part of the explanation for the rise of non-western violent movements operating around the world today. Many recent nationalist and secessionist movements

have originated either in the post-Cold War disintegration of the Soviet empire or in situations where minorities have made what some might regard as quite reasonable demands for international recognition as separate nations following long periods of persecution by hostile majority governments. Obvious examples, here, are the Kashmiris, Kosovars, Tamils or Kurds. By the same token, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria, Egypt, Iran and elsewhere is linked, among other things, to the inequalities, repression and policy failures that have characterized previous regimes and which western governments sometimes supported or condoned.

In August 1998, President Clinton ordered a missile attack on alleged Islamic terrorist sites located in the Sudan and Afghanistan. This followed the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier that month by these same fundamentalist groups. Surely, these – and earlier events of a similar kind – look ominously like a clear foretaste of Huntington's predicted civilizational wars? Certainly, Huntington publicly declared his thesis had been demonstrated. However, there are solid reasons for doubting whether Huntington's analysis is entirely valid. Here, Halliday's trenchant criticisms (1996) are especially telling:

1. The very validity of the notion of civilization can be questioned. Like the idea of nationhood it is based on the assumption that it is possible to identify and represent a set of timeless traditions. In reality, however, it makes much more sense to regard traditions as based on different and conflicting interpretations arising out of cultural creations concocted largely to suit the political interests and purposes of different élites. Thus, the case for an actual or potential confrontation between civilizations is largely a myth because no such clearly demarcated and distinctive entities can be identified.
2. The idea of clearly differentiated civilizations with distinctive cultural boundaries is further thrown into disarray when we remember the extent to which cultures and peoples have always borrowed and mixed each other's technologies, art forms, religious symbolism, and much else besides. Indeed, it seems more likely that with globalization these processes will intensify, not diminish as Huntington's argument implies. If so, then the conflicts he envisages will surely become more not less difficult to sustain or justify.
3. The fragmentation and conflicts that have occurred within civilizations, based on inter-ethnic or state divisions, have been just as marked as those between them and often much more so. This has certainly been the case in Europe, wracked for centuries by religious, civil and inter-state wars despite the apparent over-arching Christian legacy. Moreover, if we count the recent and continuing bloody conflicts in the Basque region of Spain, Northern Ireland and especially the former Yugoslavia this era did not end in 1945. The Islamic world, too, continues to be deeply divided along national and sectarian lines, among others, notwithstanding the brazen attempts by some westerners to present the alternative image of a 'green peril' – a united Islam bent on destroying its ancient enemy (Hadar 1993).

We will add that if US interventions in Sudan and Afghanistan 'proved' Huntington's thesis – which Halliday has, himself, in any case rejected – NATO's attack on Serbia in defence of the Muslim Kosovars completely contradicts the Huntington thesis. Indeed this was noted in March 1999 by a number

of editorials in the Pakistan daily newspaper *Dawn* that called on the Muslim world to acknowledge that the leading western powers were *defending* Muslims against Christians.

'Globalization will lead to a dystopian future'

Just as Huntington (and others) present a disturbing vision of the future from the right, so are there prophets of doom from the left. In an original and challenging book Roger Burbach (an American), Oscar Núñez (a Nicaraguan) and Boris Kagarlitsky (a Russian) (Burbach *et al.* 1997) suggest that globalization has triggered a number of counter reactions or anti-systemic movements due to the traumatic shocks and horrors it has engendered in many areas of the world. Their perspective is undoubtedly valuable in that the three authors are representatives of what used to be called 'the First', 'Second' and Third Worlds. They deny that they are opposed to globalization *per se*. However, they argue that 'the economic forces that currently determine the direction of globalization adversely affect most of humanity and severely limit our [that is, humankind's] ability to create a better world' (p. ix).

Given the dominance of the forces they are opposed to, they can see nothing but a **dystopian** future for all of us. They argue that the form taken by globalization will have the following features:

Dystopia – an imaginary place where things are as bad as they could possibly be.

- *Trade wars* – whereby intense competition between trading blocs leads to instability and speculation between the national currencies. In this respect they see a tension between different sectors of capitalism – with computer firms, biotech companies and TNCs in food-processing favouring free international markets, while steel, farmers and clothing manufacturers will try to defend national markets. Angry French farmers, rebellious peasants in Chiapas (Mexico) and trade union opponents of regional agreements such as NAFTA are all seen as forces resisting the integration of global markets (Burbach *et al.* 1997: 61–3).
- *Global unemployment* – with some 30 per cent of the world's 2.5 billion workers being unemployed. The argument here is that automation and information processing will permanently displace workers from the manufacturing and services sector leaving nowhere for those displaced from the land to go. Beyond the global village, the destitute and outcast will gather (pp. 64–6).
- *Destructive financial speculation* – which will allow unbridled 'robber barons' to indulge in greed and uncontrolled speculation in stocks, bonds, currencies and precious metals. While some fortunes are made in the new computer industries, the bulk of fortunes are made by junk bond scams, insider trading or those playing the markets of casino capitalism. The stability of global accumulation is, Burbach *et al.* suggest, only an illusion: a 'major catastrophe' will arise 'before we get too far into the next century' (p. 73).
- *Collapse of the poor countries* – where the neo-liberal panaceas of the World Bank have resulted in further malnutrition and destitution. Even the proclaimed success of the neo-liberal solutions in places such as Costa Rica and Chile have shown gains only for the wealthy and at the expense of those living in poverty (pp. 85–6).

- *The 'gutting' of the cities in rich countries* – marked by the massive increase of those living on welfare, those permanently unemployed and those scraping by through criminal activities. 'The violence, fear, crime, alcoholism and drug abuse that grip the underclasses of these cities is directly linked to this dependency and hopelessness' (p. 103).
- *The rise of a 'barbaric' bourgeoisie in the post-communist world* – with ineffective and parasitic states, entrepreneurs who lack ethical, intellectual, cultural or professional values, and a 'mafia' comprising old party hacks, state bureaucrats and new 'yuppies'. These groups 'are united by the lack of roots and total disrespect towards any rules and laws as well as by the lack of even minimal moral constraints' (pp. 117–21, 122).

Assessment of proposition 4

One cannot help but admire the concern and passion behind these denunciations of the present form of globalization. Indeed we concur in many of Burbach and his colleagues' observations. The emergence of a new global age is a painful, uncomfortable and often distressing process. Not to recognize this pain, discomfort and distress would be to promote a blinkered perspective, as well as showing a total insensitivity to the many marginalized and excluded people round the world. The angry and desperate Russians in queues outside banks bitterly denouncing their country's flirtation with global capitalism further demonstrate the point.

It is perhaps no coincidence that critics like Burbach and his co-authors draw their indignation from a self-confessed Marxist or socialist background. The Jeremiah-like sense of apocalyptic doom, the inevitable march of historical forces and the fear of fateful technological determinism all draw from that deep well. But it has to be recalled that Marx himself saw the dual nature of capitalism. It was both destructive *and* potentially liberating. Just as capitalism consigned feudalism and slavery to the dustbin of history (just about), so too it can be argued that globalization is undermining nationalism and other impediments to the full realization of capitalism on a worldwide scale.

The argument is *not* the heartless one that 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs', but rather that social actors and organizations can do something about the ingredients of that omelette, how it is cooked and served and who gets to eat it. It was very much part of the Marxist tradition to look to social agency to supersede the limitations of the capitalist revolution by instigating another kind of revolution on behalf of humanity at large. The chosen social vehicle for this change, the proletariat, was – according to one's view – either mistakenly identified, or not up to its historical mission. However, there is no need to collapse into an impotent sense of predestination. As another socialist writer argues (Bienefeld 1994: 97), the destructive effects of globalization will arise

only if we allow it to be so; if we remain deaf to the cries of help from societies presently being destroyed; or to the voices of those who still believe in the possibility of building stable, prosperous societies in which people can live in harmony with nature and with each other, while spending time in less stressful, more interesting jobs and devoting an increasing part of their lives to social and cultural pursuits. Technology has made this dream a possibility; politics must realize it.

AN OPTIMISTIC VISION OF OUR GLOBAL FUTURE

That final observation provides the opening for our more optimistic vision of global future, although we would not consider our position to be utopian. Technological and economic changes *can* allow a positive outcome, but people must try to make that happen. Let us mention some of these more positive changes:

1. A number of observers (for example Reich 1992; Bradley *et al.* 1993; Carnoy *et al.* 1993) argue that a new phase has arrived in the moves towards integration among TNCs. Between 1975 and 1986 there was a 50 per cent rise in the number of scientists and engineers engaged in research and the development of technology. In responding to these changes, some TNCs have downsized and concentrated their technological expertise in core areas of competency. Many others have formed strategic cross-border alliances with overseas companies. Such joint ventures increasingly involve small and medium-sized TNCs and not simply the largest. Both the increasing number of alliances between TNCs and the increase in shared R&D activity strongly suggest that the process of economic integration is deepening quite rapidly and does not always involve greater concentration of capital.
2. The development of niche markets and access to technologies that shrink distance has allowed small specialist companies to survive, sometimes at the level of a family business or a community co-operative. This has revived small-scale, craft and art-based production, often conducted in a humanitarian environment with the minimum of worker exploitation. Artists, potters, cabinet makers, small publishers, alternative health therapists, organic farmers, those making green health products, craft jewellers, small specialist shops, psychoanalysts and poets can all thrive in our global economy and many do. Fair-trading organizations and ethical firms like the Body Shop have linked small peasant producers to a global market on a non-exploitative basis.
3. Even in more conventional settings, work experience is said to be undergoing rapid change. Information technology and electronic communications provide several advantages to employers: firms can co-ordinate their operations more cheaply and easily across considerable distances; customers and producers are linked directly and instantly; many functions such as product design, accountancy and engineering can be easily subcontracted to specialist outside firms, more in touch with rapidly changing markets and production methods; and the design, experimentation and testing of manufactured and other products all benefit from a growing number of computer applications (Bradley *et al.* 1993: 16).
4. At the same time, innovations in manufacturing technologies mean that machines are becoming programmable, multi-functional, smaller and less energy intensive than they once were. The advanced economies are undergoing a steady process of reducing the bulk of the raw material used in production, a process accelerated by using microelectronics so as to miniaturize many products. Apparently, although the GDP in the USA has risen twenty times in real value over the last 100 years its weight, measured in tonnes, has increased little (*The Economist*, 28 September 1996: 43). Contrary

to the prediction of the doom and gloom merchants (and the old Yorkshire saying that 'Where there's muck there's money') economic prosperity does not have to produce mountains of waste.

5. There has been a marked rise in the number of viable small firms across the western world since the 1980s or so as the economic and technological barriers to entry have been lowered. Meanwhile, the old hierarchical, pyramid-shaped structure once so noticeable in many large companies is becoming flatter as the emphasis on problem-solving, the need to respond quickly to specific customer requirements and so on combine to place much more emphasis on team work, self-reliance, multi-skilling and close collaboration between employees. Reich (1992) describes these changes in terms of what he calls the increased importance of 'enterprise webs'. Enterprise webs undermine managerial authority, they render business bureaucracy redundant, they disperse control widely within organizations and they therefore empower many employees.

If we think about all these changes while situating them within the context of growing globalization we end up with a much more enticing vision of contemporary business organization. Even very large, global corporations are apparently breaking down internally into overlapping networks of partly self-reliant enterprise webs operating on a more human scale. Meanwhile their external boundaries with domestic suppliers and foreign TNCs at home and abroad are effectively dissolving as these same webs coalesce across companies and countries.

Finally, according to Reich (1992: Chapter 4) wealth creation in more and more sectors increasingly depends on the contribution played by the 'symbolic analysts'. He claims that such people now constitute about 20 per cent of the workforce in the advanced countries. They enjoy specialist, problem-identifying and problem-solving skills. These are critically linked to their grasp of different kinds of symbolic knowledge in creative design including the arts and media, scientific research, oral and visual communications, the ability to engage in strategic thinking and so on. Their centrality to all kinds of economic and creative activity means they command high rewards, are frequently wooed by rival companies and so are increasingly mobile, taking their knowledge, connections and skills with them as they move between organizations and countries. Although Reich's symbolic analysts may be the new 'movers and shakers' of the contemporary world economy, others outside this charmed circle can also benefit. Between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of all jobs in the rich countries are linked to knowledge-creation and information-processing in both manufacturing and services (Carnoy *et al.*, 1993: Chapter 2) and it is in this area where four-fifths of all new jobs are being created. Knowledge-based industries now generate more than half of total GDP in the advanced economies.

A nation's wealth creation and its ability to compete increasingly thus depends much more on the skills and creative resources possessed by its citizens, and their capacity to understand, transfer and improve technology, than on the actual ownership of different kinds of tangible assets (Reich 1992: Chapter 12). The most important role any government can now play is to concentrate on raising the knowledge-acquiring capacities of its inhabitants at all levels. We can anticipate, in turn, that this shift will help to generate a more

educated, adaptable and reflexive citizenry, more willing and able to question authority, demand autonomy and act as key agents in shaping policy agendas.

Of course, this rosy picture has to be balanced by our knowledge of the many 'global victims' (see Chapters 4, 8 and 9) who have so far been left far behind in the race to knowledge. Again, reflexive citizens using their skills for benign purposes are not the only beneficiaries of globalization – drug-dealers, arms merchants and media moguls are also 'global winners'. Nonetheless it is important to emphasize that the economic and technical changes we have identified and the rise of the symbolic economy can *potentially* generate a more democratic and participatory future global society. Work can be more empowering and even enjoyable, governments can become more accountable, while through the interdependence of the world economy wars can be avoided.

THE MAKING OF GLOBAL SOCIETY

We have considered the possible gains to be made from changes in economic management and technology. There are several other major gains at a social level to be realized from globalization and globalism:

1. An extension of democratic, civil and human rights.
2. The spread of education and literacy.
3. Information and access to communications for all the world's inhabitants.
4. The growth of multicultural understanding and awareness.
5. The empowering of women and other historically disadvantaged groups.
6. The promotion of environment-friendly production systems.
7. The growth of leisure, creativity and freedom from want.

Can any of these dreams be realized? There are those who still pin their hopes on a 'positive nationalism'. Bienefeld (1994: 122), for example, while recognizing the malign as well as the benign aspects of nationalism, nonetheless says that we have little alternative but to rely on a reformed nation state. In what other form, he asks

can we realistically hope, at the end of the twentieth century to redefine and reconstruct political entities that would allow us to manage the increasingly destructive forces of global competition while providing individuals with the capacity to define themselves as social beings and while containing the risk of political conflict between such political entities?

The question is a good one, but we feel that those who wish to reform the nation state do not adequately recognize how far disillusionment has already set in. In some 'hollowed-out' or 'broken-backed' states, for example in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Myanmar or Somalia, the state has imploded – leaving its former citizens to the mercies of gangs and warlords. But even in the industrialized states, the belief in nationhood and formal democracy has eroded. The former appears increasingly as parochial and irrelevant while democracy seems to offer little more than a hollow administrative system for reaching decisions that do not begin to reach the needs or tap the energies of citizens living in the rapidly changing world. Besides, as we argued in Chapter 5, the cultural pluralism char-

acteristic of the global age undermines the idea of territoriality and sovereignty, the historical building blocks of the nation state.

There clearly is still a need for developing more active national democracies with flourishing civil societies. However, in addition to, and in some respects superseding the nation state are other sites of political encounter and engagement. Let us just mention again some of these sites, which were discussed at greater length elsewhere in this book:

1. At the international level courts, particularly those dealing with human rights and genocide have begun to make effective judgements that transcend domestic legislation.
2. The International Governmental Organizations, such as the UN and its agencies, have made some advances in acting on behalf of a global community – although the UN is still crucially dependent on the members of the Security Council and especially the USA.
3. A proliferation of regional bodies has developed, admittedly with highly variable levels of power and authority.
4. TNCs have generated immense resources and power and are effectively out of the control of the nation state. In Chapter 7 we show how some accept their social responsibilities on a global scale.
5. Transnational communities have developed through enhanced travel and communications.
6. Global cities have evolved to service the needs of the world economy and its cosmopolitan citizens, a development discussed in Chapter 15.
7. Global diasporas and religions have resurfaced to bridge the gap between universalism and the need for linking to one's past (Chapter 19).
8. Global social movements have arisen to help build the global society of the future (Chapters 16, 17 and 18).

We need to say just a little more about global social movements. In sociology there has always been a creative tension between 'structure' and 'agency' – what happens to one and what one makes happen. Social movements are the key agents for progressive and humanitarian social change. Even if they only achieve a small part of the tasks they have set for themselves, their struggles will have been worthwhile. The environment and women's movements have merited our special attention as they both seem to have some transformatory potential but other social movements are also potentially significant in the slow construction of a relatively benign and functioning global society.

REVIEW AND FINAL REMARKS

In this concluding chapter we have partly concurred with those who argue that not everything connected with the making of a global society brings advantages and gains to the human condition. A more integrated world is not necessarily a

more harmonious or a more equal one. We are faced with greater risks as well as opportunities. As we have seen throughout the book much transnational activity is atavistic and potentially damaging to others – as in the case of neo-Nazi cells, crime gangs or drug syndicates who operate on an international basis. Some transnational movements and groups may evoke a common universal purpose, yet are divided and made ineffective by internal squabbles.

There are also plausible concerns about the ways in which global homogenization could eventually dilute the local and national particularities, about environmental problems, demographic expansion, joblessness and poverty, the emergence of terrorism, drug-trafficking, and the spread of epidemics throughout the world. Globalization has so far done little to diminish the blight of poverty and wretchedness in which about half of the world's inhabitants is forced to live. Social movements have still not proved effective in mobilizing efforts to reduce global inequalities. Thus, we are not dealing with a unilinear process that will inevitably take us to a better world.

Despite these concessions to the sceptics and critics, we nonetheless argue that globalization has become irreversible and is taking on new forms not previously encountered. Moreover, although the direction in which it may evolve is unclear and certainly not fixed, some global changes are very positive. They provide a greater potential than ever before for the world's inhabitants to forge new understandings, alliances and structures – both from below and in alliance with elite institutions – in the pursuit of more harmonious, environmentally sustainable and humanitarian solutions to local and global problems. The world of work has been transformed and for many lucky citizens the possibilities for a creative engagement with global changes are much enhanced. In itself globalization will lead to neither a dystopia nor a utopia. The future directions of global society depend on us as ordinary world citizens, on what moral positions we choose and what battles we are prepared to fight.

A 'global ecumene', 'a universal humanism', a 'shared planet', a 'cosmopolitan democracy' – these idealistic notions are not realities, but possibilities and aspirations. The world remains lop-sided. Many powerful and wealthy actors profit disproportionately from global changes. Throughout this book we have shown how 'global winners' use their privileged access to power, wealth and opportunity to feather their own nests. The TNCs, crime syndicates, rich tourists, skilled migrants and others are all major beneficiaries of the opportunities for transnational activity. But it behoves us to remind you, in a final word, of the many 'global losers' – the refugees, poor peasants, the underclasses of the collapsing cities – who still peer through the bars at the gilded cages of the rich and powerful.

The key social challenge of the twenty-first century is to prise open the bars for these disadvantaged people so that they can discover the transformatory possibilities globalization has generated. A vibrant civil society and active global social movements provide far-off glimpses of that benign future. However distant, we hope we have encouraged you to see some of the many possibilities for social engagement, co-operation and positive change.

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If you would like to know more

- An articulate and coherent critique of globalization from a Marxist point of view is provided in Roger Burbach *et al.* (1997) *Globalization and its Discontents*.
- Robert Reich's book, *The Work of Nations* (1992) should be read together with the contrasting account by Jeremy Rifkin (1995) titled *The End of Work*.
- Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1995) speaks of the gloomy visions of a clash of civilizations or a homogenized global consumer culture.
- Finally, Richard Falk's *Explorations at the Edge of Time* (1992) is the work of a plausible futurologist.

Group work

1. Divide the class into several smaller groups. Each will examine one of the four propositions from both sides for about thirty minutes and prepare a brief report to be presented to the class. On balance do the various groups agree or disagree with their propositions and why?
2. Working in groups of three or four, students will agree in advance to collect material on particular world political/military/economic crises (perhaps assigned on a regional basis). Before their class presentations each team will summarize (a) the nature of the events/problems and so on within their area and (b) discuss what light their data throws on any one or more of the propositions. How far do the team assessments agree or differ?
3. Some critics of globalization express anxiety concerning the disquieting sense of lost local or national identity that many individuals may feel as a result. Drawing on their own personal experiences, what are the perceptions of the class members themselves on this question and how can they account for them? Are there any apparent overall social indicators that explain whatever individual differences or similarities may emerge?

Questions to think about

1. The degree to which the world economy has become integrated is no greater than it was before the First World War. Discuss.
2. Examine and assess the fears expressed in the theories of Barber and Huntington.
3. Discuss the view that a global monoculture will destroy diversity and difference.
4. Using the material in this chapter and any other sources you like, construct: (a) an optimistic scenario for an emergent global society; followed by (b) a critique that traces the possible parallel dangers and difficulties.