

Globalism (Part Seven): The Countertide Rolls In

by Charles Whitaker

Forerunner, "Prophecy Watch," January 2002

Just like a century ago, the march of global capitalism appears irresistible.¹ In 1900, the first age of globalization was in its stride, American and British interests joining to create the biggest economy the world had ever seen. In relative terms, it was every bit as interdependent (though perhaps not as integrated) as today's global economy.² However, irresistible, unstoppable it was not! For, by that same date, 1900, vast countervailing forces were militating against the British-led global economic initiative. As we saw in an earlier article, the first age of globalism died with the archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, Bosnia, 1914—violently, surprisingly, and suddenly.

Will history repeat itself? As strong and vigorous as it appears on the surface, is today's globalism really irresistible, "a great tide, inexorably wearing away the established order of things" as former-President Bill Clinton avers?³ Or, are countervailing forces arising to destroy its promise of peace and prosperity? Is it doomed to die in unbelievable violence, as did its predecessor some 85 years ago?

Notwithstanding the impression one gains by perusing the globalists' glitzy web site, www.theGlobalist.com, globalization may not be coming up roses. The Aga Khan perceives "a deep and vigorous countertide, . . . a 'new tribalism,'" shaping our world.⁴ What is the nature of this countertide, this "new tribalism?"

First, we would do well not to underestimate the scope and strength of this countertide. Ironically, the only thing that is *global* about it is its range; tribalism is "hitting the beaches" everywhere.

From the Balkans to the Horn of Africa, from the southern tier of the former Soviet Union to western China, from Indonesia to Mindanao in the Philippines, *extremist tribalism* is on the rise.⁵

. . . [A]ll over the world, we see a kind of reversion to tribalism. . . . We see it in Russia, in Yugoslavia, in Canada, in the United States. . . . What is it about all this globalization of communication that is making people return to more—to smaller units of identity?⁶

The breadth of tribalism imparts to it a strength rivaling that of globalism. One analyst, citing the "steady uptick in violent conflicts from Africa to Europe," suggests that "endless debates about globalization may turn out to be a mere sideshow"⁷ to the main attraction of fragmenting, squabbling states—and the inevitable wars between them.

The Nature of Tribalism

The dictionary definition of *tribalism* is "a strong feeling of identity with and loyalty to one's tribe or group."⁸ Note the words *tribe* and *group*. Tribalism, distinct from nationalism, does not connect one with the nation, but with some sub-national unit—an ethnic group or tribe or clan. The tidal forces of tribalism *fragment* empires into nations and nations into tribes.

Looked at this way, tribalism is a movement wherein the individual relates not so much to the norms (often vaguely articulated) established by the global mainstream as to the values (usually well-defined) of a small ethnic or religious group. Certainly, one given to tribalism feels no ties to the international community. The Islamist (as distinct from the more mainstream Islamic) mores of Afghanistan's Taliban have nothing in common with the ideologies of the cosmopolitan bureaucrats regulating life in the European Union.

To indicate the direction in which tribalism can lead, note this chilling statement made by a senior Indian official. This was his official reaction to President Clinton's statement that India, in detonating a nuclear weapon, was not acting responsibly in the global community:

It would be a great error to assume that simply advocating the new mantras of globalization and the market makes national security subservient to global trade. The 21st century will *not* be a century of trade. The world still has to address the unfinished agenda of the centuries.⁹

The Indian official does not say exactly what this "unfinished agenda" is, but odds are more than 50-50 that it has something to do with the Hindu/Muslim conflict—it has something to do with Pakistan. There is little that would pass for good will between India and Pakistan these days, not much free trade, no open border. Their feud over Kashmir could erupt into war, even nuclear war, at any time.

Sightings of the Countertide

A review of current literature indicates the scope and vitality of the anti-globalism tide. In case after case, we see a force pushing for a return to smaller units, the dissolution of large economic and political entities. Let us start by putting globalism in perspective. Notice the many powerful forces lined up against globalization.

Like any powerful movement for change, globalization encounters resistance—in America from religious fundamentalists, labor unions and their allies; abroad from anti-Americanists; everywhere from cultural traditionalists.¹⁰

This popular resistance to globalism spawned the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization's meeting in Seattle during the summer of 1999. The protestors' philosophical backdrop is best spelled out in a book whose very title suggests a return to small units: *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn Toward the Local*.¹¹ These people, wanting to return to a local economy, "see globalization as a process that is destroying the earth, perpetrating vast injustices, and being imposed by a small circle of powerful corporate leaders."¹²

The danger of this resistance lies in the depths of its roots. Average John Doe American citizen, committed to nation, mother, and apple pie, is seeing less eye-to-eye with his leadership with every passing day. Such a breach between citizenry and elite portends distressing political sickness.

[E]conomic globalization is creating a growing gap between denationalized elites and nationalist publics. . . . The consequences . . . are nationalist, illiberal and populist reactions to globalization. The United States is not immune to these trends. . . . American wealth and power are at their peak. The national unity, economic equity and cultural integrity of America are not. In the broadest sense, American national identity is under

challenge from a multiculturalism that subverts it from below and a cosmopolitanism that erodes it from above. Patriotism is passé among large sectors of American elites.¹³

That may be. Yet, for the average citizen, the problem is less one of outlook as it is one of pocketbook. That is why "first Ross Perot, then Patrick Buchanan tapped into the domestic discontent of blue-collar workers spurned by a Clinton administration focused on free trade and the middle class."¹⁴ So prevalent is tribalism that some commentators feel the triumphalism of globalist economists will eventually fall quiet in the face of a backlash generated by ever-widening income disparities.¹⁵ Inarguably, globalization is *increasing* the income gap between rich and poor, not narrowing it, a phenomenon that manifests itself in America as well as in the world at large. In the United States, "income inequality . . . is increasing, not only because of gains at the top, but more disturbingly, because of losses at the bottom."¹⁶ Politically, the consequence has been a

[p]opular backlash against globalization [that] has produced a political stalemate on most international economic issues. As a result, the president has had no effective authority to negotiate new trade agreements since 1994. Legislation to replenish the IMF languished for a year in the midst of the Asian crisis. . . .¹⁷

The figures suggest that globalism shows every sign of creating a stratified class structure in America, where Americans are increasingly unable to enjoy the social mobility they have in the past. The globalized economy seems to be engendering two classes of citizens, those who *get* from the global economy and those who *give* to support it.

Former secretary of labor Robert Reich, among others, has pointed out that America is developing into two societies—not so much black and white but cosmopolitan versus national, or between those who have directly, even extravagantly, reaped the benefits in recent years from the new globalized economy and those who have paid its price in terms of military service, endangered jobs, and repressed wages. The former may represent 15 to 25 percent of the population. . . . Facing them are the vast majority of citizens who will no doubt be asked to pay the price of their country's policy of hegemony.¹⁸

The United States is not alone. The widening gap between rich and poor is an *international* phenomenon.

The ratio of average income of the richest country in the world to that of the poorest has risen from about 9 to 1 at the end of the nineteenth century to at least 60 to 1 today. That is, the average family in the United States is 60 times richer than the average family in Ethiopia. . . . Ironically, inequality is growing at a time when the triumph of democracy and open markets was supposed to usher in a new age of freedom and opportunity. *In fact, both developments seem to be having the opposite effect.*¹⁹

The remedies sought by many of the world's peoples may not be to America's liking.

Most recently, a United Nations study suggests that while globalization may benefit the United States—the annual sales of General Motors, we learn, are greater than the gross domestic products of Thailand or Norway, while Ford generates more income than Saudi Arabia—much of the world is being left behind. *And so, if the debate was once about*

*whether America was headed for the skids, it is now about whether globalization will simply trigger an anti-American backlash.*²⁰

This is not a postured gloom-and-doom pronouncement; the backlash is not the figment of fertile imaginations any more than the Euro is, or the proposed Asian Monetary Fund. These are in fact manifestations of trading blocks' determination to go it on their own, marginalizing the United States. Unless this trend is reversed soon, the world will witness "severe international conflicts and the disintegration of global economic links."²¹

Cultural traditionalists are yet another group ever against globalism. Cultural traditionalists urge that local policies, values, and mores (which are, incidentally, usually highly pagan) should take precedence over the mainstream norms of international law. An example of cultural traditionalism in America is a religious group that claims the right of polygamy, in spite of federal and state laws reflecting mainstream monogamous values. In an international context, a current example is Afghanistan's Taliban, religious leaders who claim the Koran gives Afghanistan the right to trade children as slaves, again against all international norms.

Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's prime minister and spokesman for anti-Americanism of any hue, issues this bitterly sardonic complaint against globalization.

[W]hat is from the West is universal. Other values and cultures are superfluous and unnecessary. If they remain, there will be a clash of civilizations. To avoid this there should be only one civilization in the world. Thus the globalized world will be totally uniform. Variety is equal to being intransigent and must therefore be eliminated.²²

Finally, the fragmentation of the alliance between North America and Europe is another example of the range of tribalism. One observer perceives better than many in God's church the current state of the gradual dissolution of this Alliance since the end of the Cold War.

[N]o one, and certainly no American, should underestimate the extent to which Eurofederalism is inspired by *a resentment of the power and success of the United States—and, as some would have it, the "angle-Saxons"*—over the last fifty years. . . . [France's late president Francois Mitterrand commented that] "France does not know it, but we are at war with America. Yes, a permanent war, a vital war, an economic war, a war without death. Yes, they are very hard the Americans, they are voracious, they want undivided power over the world."²³

If France is at war with America, then the EU is at war with England, which is fragmenting as a result. In England, the "Union Jack" is all but dead, as Great Britain's component parts decouple more and more:

Today, few, especially in the United States, realize that a great nation has already ceased to exist, and that its fragments are about to be rearranged in an utterly different form. However, in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland the first shock of dissolution has already passed. . . . The process of disintegration is likely to accelerate in the near future.

24

The tide of tribalism is a force of disintegration, fragmentation, and dissolution. That force, powerful and ubiquitous, threatens the cohesion globalists seek to build.

Israel's Rebellion by Tribalism

The Old Testament is a good case-study of God's view of, and reaction to, tribalism—identifying with the tribe at the *expense* of the nation.

Genesis 49 records Jacob's prophecy concerning his sons' descendants. The patriarch clearly based his comments on his knowledge of their individual *distinctiveness*. History shows, just as clearly, that God never intended to submerge that distinctiveness, to obscure or obliterate the personality traits that even today make the nations of modern-day Israel different from each other. Quite the contrary, from the very beginning, He endeavored to maintain their tribal identity.

- » In the wilderness trek, He allocated each tribe a distinct area in the camp (Numbers 2:1-34).

- » He dedicated each tribe its specific place in the march (Numbers 10:11-28).

- » Working through Joshua, He allocated Israel's inheritance, the land, by tribe (Joshua 13-22).

- » He even required marriages within tribes when ones with mates outside of the tribe could result in the loss of tribal inheritance (Numbers 36:6-7).

God had no intention of sublimating the identity of each tribe. He *organized* Israel by tribe, and He will continue to do so into perpetuity, as Revelation 7:5-8 indicates. The twelve gates of the New Jerusalem will bear "the names of the twelve tribes of children of Israel" (Revelation 21:12).

With this work of tribal perpetuation, however, God designed a rich counterpoint: He sought all the while to make Israel into a unified nation, which, like America in some respects, would be *one nation melded of its distinctive parts*. The appellation "children of Israel" well expresses this counterpoint, for it calls attention to the various children (plural) of one person (Israel).

God recognizes each individual tribe and respects its identity, but treats the various tribes as one nation. Referring to the Exodus, Moses asks the people, "Did God ever . . . take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation?" (Deuteronomy 4:34, 6-8). It is interesting to note that, to protect the integrity of the nation, God commanded that Israel not marry Gentiles (see Exodus 34:13-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-3). God commanded marriage within Israel to ensure the continued identity of the nation.

As the rebellion of Korah indicates (Numbers 16), God did not take kindly to people's attempts to return to tribalism—to dissociate themselves from the nation God was building through Moses and to revert to the tribe as the basic political unit. God treated Korah's actions, and those of his confederates, as rebellion.

Dathan, Abiram, and On were all of the tribe of Reuben (verse 1). They probably allied themselves with a disaffected Levite, Korah, to fulfill what they defined as their destiny. After all, they must

have reasoned, Reuben deserved a degree of deference as the firstborn, did he not? Dathan and his cronies probably wanted to ensure that their tribe did not become eclipsed by Levi (the tribe of Moses and Aaron) or by Judah. The Reubenites may have felt threatened by the marriage of Aaron (of the tribe of Levi) to Elisheba (Exodus 6:23). She was the daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, and therefore of the preeminent family of Judah (Numbers 10:14). The Reubenites perhaps felt more marginalized every day, as the locus of power and status seemed to shift to Levi and Judah. Their thinking was purely *tribal*, not national. It was not consonant with God's thinking at all.

God's emphasis on the nationhood of Israel did not abate with the end of the theocracy and the commencement of the monarchy. David asks God in prayer, "Who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people . . .?" (II Samuel 7:23). At Solomon's death, the united kingdom split into two parts, basically along tribal lines. The incident portrays tribalism at its worst:

What portion have we in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!
Now, see to your own house, O David!
(I Kings 12:16)

In the revolt of Israel from Solomon's son Rehoboam, the ten northern tribes displayed their total rejection of the leadership of Judah, the scepter tribe (Genesis 49:10). This cleavage between Israel and Judah exists to this day.

By the period of the late monarchy, God places little emphasis on the tribes *as tribes*. The prophets address Israel and Judah as nations: "Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity" (Isaiah 1:4; see also Jeremiah 2:11).

In the church era, God remains committed to create of the twelve tribes one nation—Israel. As Paul writes, the Israel of his day remained "beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Romans 11:28). Though He eventually will disperse His people "among all nations" because of their sins, God remains committed to regathering them, reconstituting them under Him as a *single* nation. God speaks through Ezekiel:

As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: "For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions." Then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions." Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. . . . Then say to [the children of Israel], "Thus says the Lord God: 'Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.'"
(Ezekiel 37:16-17, 21-22)

This is God's vision of Israel: *One nation*—organized forever around the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, one gate for each tribe.

Today, God's work of integration continues apace, only on economic and political levels in the context of this "present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). Next month, we will delve into the reasons *why* globalism is so important to Him, *how* He is using it to ready Israel to become eventually a single nation under Him.

1 G. J. Ikenberry, "Don't Panic: How Secure Is Globalization's Future?" *Foreign Affairs*, May 2000, p. 145. Mr. Ikenberry's comments are part of his review of Robert Gilpin's book *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21 st Century*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Kenneth Waltz ("Globalization and American Power," *The National Interest*, Spring 2000) makes the same point: "Globalizers, to be sure, do not claim that globalization is complete, only that the process is irreversible" (p. 49).

2 See Kenneth Waltz, "Globalization and American Power," *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, p. 48. Mr. Waltz continues:

Finding that the level of [economic] interdependence in 1999 approximately equals that of 1920 is hardly surprising. What is true of trade also holds for capital flows, again as a percentage of GDP. . . . Despite today's ease of communications, financial markets in 1900 were at least as integrated as they are now.

Waltz is a research associate of the Institute of War and Peace Studies and adjunct professor at Columbia University.

3 As quoted by Lawrence F. Kaplan, "A Bridge Too Far," *National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 135. Andrew J. Bacevich ("Policing Utopia: The Military Imperatives of Globalization," *The National Interest*, Summer 1999) quotes Sandy Berger, Mr. Clinton's national security adviser, as saying, "We cannot turn back the tides of globalization any more that King Knute [sic] could turn back the tides" (p. 9).

4 The Aga Khan, as quoted by Yahya Sadowski in his article "Ethnic Conflict," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 12. Mr. Sadowski is associate professor at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

5 Thomas M. Franck, "Are Human Rights Universal?" *Foreign Affairs*, January /February 2001, p. 191 (emphasis added). Mr. Franck is Murray and Ida Becker Professor of Law and Director of the Center for International Studies at New York University's School of Law.

6 Neil Postman, as quoted by Yahya Sadowski in his article "Ethnic Conflict," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 12. Mr. Postman is chair of the Department of Culture and Communication at New York University.

7 Jacob Heilbrunn, "Globalization's Boosters and Critics," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 118. Mr. Heilbrunn's comments appear in his review of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, by Thomas Friedman (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999). Friedman's is a sober and moderate look at the nature and future of globalization.

8 *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition, "Tribalism."

9 Kaplan, *ibid.* (emphasis added).

10 Waltz, *ibid.*, p. 46. On page 49, Mr. Waltz quotes Paul Krugman: "The United States

is still almost 90 percent an economy that produces goods and services for its own use." Citing Linda Wiess (*The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era*), Waltz continues:

For the world's three largest economies—the United States, Japan, and the European Union taken as a unit—exports account for 12 percent or less of GDP. The world, then, is less interdependent than is usually supposed.

11 A collection of 43 essays edited by Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, First Edition, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996. A more direct influence on the protesters was the sensationalized book *When Corporations Rule the World* by David C. Korten, first published in 1995. To Korten, the "when" of his title is "right now."

12 Paul Heyne, *The Independent Review*, Summer 2000, p. 137. Mr. Heyne's comments appear in his review of John P. Powelson's book, *The Moral Economy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

13 Samuel Huntington, "Robust Nationalism," *The National Interest*, Winter 1999/2000, p. 31. Mr. Huntington is the Albert J. Weatherhead III Professor at Harvard University.

14 Heilbrunn, *ibid.*, p. 119.

15 See particularly Eric J. Hobsbawm, *On the Edge of the New Century*, New York: New Press, 2000.

16 Nancy Birdsall, "Life is Unfair: Inequality in the World," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 76. Nancy Birdsall is executive vice-president of the Inter-American Development Bank. See also Avinash Persaud, "The Knowledge Gap," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001, p. 107.

17 C. Fred Bergsten, "America's Two-Front Economic Conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001, p. 16.

18 Charles W. Maynes, "The Perils of (and for) an Imperial America," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 36. Mr. Maynes is president of the Eurasia Foundation.

19 Birdsall, *ibid.* (emphasis added).

20 Heilbrunn, *ibid.* (emphasis added).

21 Bergsten, *ibid.*, p. 24.

2II Peter W. Rodman, "The World's Resentment: Anti-Americanism as a Global Phenomenon," *The National Interest*, Summer 2000, p. 33. Mr. Rodman is Director of National Security Programs at The Nixon Center.

23 Conrad Black, "Britain's Atlantic Option and America's Stake," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 15 (emphasis added). Mr. Black is chairman of Hollinger International Inc., a newspaper publisher whose titles include the London *Daily and Sunday Telegraph*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *National Post* of Canada, and the *Jerusalem Post*.

24 Peter Hitchens, "The View from the Margins," *The National Interest*, Summer 2000, p. 115. Mr. Hitchens' comments appear in a review of Norman Davies' *The Isles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Mr. Hitchens is the author of a forthcoming book, *The Abolition of Britain*.