

## CHAPTER 36

# *Globalization and Resistance*

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###### Soviet Union

*glasnost*, 1985

##### B. The New Technology

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###### World Wide Web

Tim Berners, 1990

##### C. Economic Globalization: Business Organization and Investment

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#### II. Resistance and Alternatives

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## Chapter Summary

**Kerala.** Kerala, India, is in many ways a microcosm of the problems and pressures of globalization. Traditional culture is at odds with Western culture, which comes in through the radio, through residents educated or working abroad, through foreign products. While the cold war was ending, and the world was adjusting to the resulting changes, globalization was appearing. Resistance to the globalization came indirectly from nationalism, and religion, and from direct opposition.

**Chapter Summary.** Globalization was not new in this period, but reached new levels. Changes in technology increased the pace of cultural influence worldwide, and the impact of economies. Multinational companies grew large enough to exert pressure on governments. Cultural globalization meant the spread of dominant cultures around the world. Increasing industrialization, some of it very rapid, led to mounting environmental problems. In spite of the trends to globalization, resistance came from nationalist movements and from religious revival.

**Globalization: Causes and Processes.** The spread of globalization at the end of the 20th century came in part by political decisions. China's move, in 1978, to open its economy to foreign trade was crucial. The increasing openness of the Soviet Union, from 1985 on, and then its collapse, brought large areas of eastern Europe and central Asia into the world market which hastened their development. Countries in south Asia and Latin America followed, until only a few countries held to isolation in the 1990s. The use of English as the international language facilitated the process.

**The New Technology.** New developments made possible the widespread use of the cellular phone, computers, and satellite linkages for television. The World Wide Web, developed in 1990 by Tim Berners, launched the age of the Internet. The Internet was influential in bringing many remote areas into easy contact with the world.

**Economic Globalization: Business Organization and Investment.** International investment has accelerated significantly. Exports and imports have increased and multinational corporations have extended business organization across political boundaries. They continue the search for cheap raw materials, and invest in nations with high interest rates. Because of their resources, multinational companies were able to determine policies in weaker nations. Even as they polluted the environment, multinationals promoted industrial skills and brought more-enlightened labor policies. The poor and the better off are separated by a widening gulf in industrial countries, although a middle class is growing in some nations.

**Migration.** During the 1990s, international migration patterns continued. Countries with negative population growth needed new lower-skilled workers. Their arrival resulted in tensions between local populations and the new arrivals. One new phenomenon is the to-and-fro travel that keeps some migrants immersed in two cultures.

**Cultural Globalization.** Cultural contact and exchange accelerated by the close of the 1990s. A path to worldwide homogeneity has been caused by the adoption of Western cultural values, art forms, consumer goods, and the English language. Holidays, such as Halloween, spread around the globe. The spread was not one-way; Japanese and European fashions and music groups gained popularity worldwide. One of the consequences was (and is) an epidemic of obesity, especially among children. The spread of dominant cultures was extensive, but not complete, and in many areas was modified by local custom.

**Institutions of Globalization.** Political forms globalized slower than technology, business, and consumer culture. The United Nations, with mixed success, attempted to calm conflicts and help refugee populations. It similarly dealt with gender and population control issues, and combated the AIDS epidemic. The importance of other international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) grew. So did regional economic arrangements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

**Resistance and Alternatives.** Protests directed at globalization emerged near the turn of the century. Two other rallying points, nationalism and religion, sometimes confronted globalization.

**Protest and Economic Uncertainties.** A vigorous international antiglobalization movement appeared by the end of the 1990s. Followers of the movement thought economic development was threatening the environment, exploited cheap labor, and promoted rampant consumerism. Rich nations and the wealthy, it was alleged, benefited at the expense of most people. Some world regions suffered as unfavorable trade balances damaged their economies. Reform efforts by international organizations, such as the World Bank, might increase unemployment. Many decided that globalization hurt more than it helped.

**Nationalism and New Religious Currents.** Some countries supported national customs in opposition to the threat of cultural globalization. Globalization was seen by some as an intrusion on their sovereignty. Religious movements, often opposed to the sexual mores, freedom for women, and consumerism, associated with globalization, reacted by insisting on their distinctiveness. New vigor came to Orthodox Christianity, Protestant fundamentalism, Hinduism, and Islam. In many cases, the religious revival joined with nationalism to turn even more tolerant religions exclusive. Regional conflicts were exacerbated by religious hostility, for example in the former Yugoslavia. Impoverished groups not succeeding in the global economy proved receptive. Terrorism also became associated with religion, with some of the most violent attacks supported by religious leaders. Yet most of the religious renewal was aimed at internal problems, and finding solutions to local challenges.

**The Global Environment.** Damage to the environment was not a novelty in this period, but did reach unaccustomed levels. The opening of the communist world demonstrated that extreme economic devastation had occurred. Policies followed in China, southeast Asia, Brazil, and sub-Saharan Africa appeared equally dangerous. Economic development strategies designed to assist growth in many less-developed regions failed to raise living standards or environmental damage. In 2000, the wealthiest one-fifth of humanity dominated consumption and produced the most pollution. No solutions were in sight.

**Environmental Issues as Global Concerns.** Environmental issues are now focal points of debate and government policy. The greenhouse effect has led to substantial warming and could have massively damaging effects. Global warming will continue, according to scientific predictions, changing areas now under cultivation to deserts, and coastal areas will be flooded. Rain forest destruction is a serious problem, because the forests do not grow back. Major international conferences have addressed the problem, but governments have been slow to respond to measures that might damage their economies.

**Disease.** As in the past, global contacts have involved disease. AIDS spread rapidly during the 1980s. Results so far are less severe than earlier epidemics.

**Toward the Future.** History has demonstrated that efforts to predict the future will fail, but it does allow a basis for thinking about what will occur.

**Projecting from Trends.** What trends will continue? We do know that population growth will decline and that individuals will live longer. But unexpected happenings might alter the trend. The fate of democracies, based on past experiences, remains murky. How the mutual trends of mass consumerism and increased religious interest will interact is equally uncertain.

**Big Changes.** Some thinkers look to major departures from past developments. The 1960s "population bomb" was one such argument. Although that prediction failed, others have taken its place. Another postulation, for a postindustrial world, is still being argued.

**The Problem of the Contemporary Period.** The many changes occurring in world history during the 20th century make prediction difficult. Western dominance is past, but what will replace it? The same uncertainty applies to the status of women.

**Thinking Historically: How Much Historical Change?** The "end-of-history" concept emphasized the new dominance of the democratic form of government. But new systems of political and economic thought did not spread as uniformly and consistently as democracy and global consumerism intended.

**GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Civilizations and Global Forces.** How will individual civilizations develop in the future? The key civilizations have been shaping world history for a millennia. It now appears that separate characteristics of civilizations are merging and being replaced by global loyalties. But it is clear that individual civilizations retain principal characteristics. It probably is premature to postulate global homogeneity.

## KEY TERMS

**Globalization:** the increasing interconnectedness of all parts of the world; opposed by many environmental and social justice groups.

**Multinational corporations.** business organizations with connections across political borders.

**North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).** Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico to create a common commercial zone.

## LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

1. **Which aspects of globalization do you find most influential in forming the conditions of life around the world at the close of the 20th century?** Open discussion session with answers based on personal preferences. Consider various aspects of life: the economy, culture, intellectual life, diplomacy.
2. **What are the varieties of prognostication for the future? Which do you find the most meaningful? What sort of future do you foresee?** What factors make prediction difficult? Is there a value to prognostication?

## COURSE REVIEW LESSON SUGGESTION

Have students trace various themes (interaction among societies, technology, social systems, cultural interaction and developments, political structures) through various areas of civilization.

## CLASS DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS

1. **What are the varieties of prognostication for the future? Which do you find the most meaningful? What sort of future do you foresee?**

Open discussion session with answers based on personal preferences.

2. **In what sense can it be said that the 20th century represents a new period in world civilizations?**

Criteria established throughout the text: parallel developments in major civilizations (new technologies, new political forms, tendency toward cultural secularizations); reshuffling of political boundaries (decolonization, loosening of Western geopolitical dominance); intensification of international contacts (more extensive trade, worldwide alliance systems, cultural exchanges).

3. **What trends in political organization and economic development can be identified in 20th-century world civilizations?**

Political organization seems to favor continued dominance of democratic parliamentarianism, well established in industrialized countries; successful attacks on authoritarian forms of government in Philippines, Korea, many African states, Indonesia, and throughout Latin America; it is unclear if new democracies are firmly rooted. Economic trends based on industrialization; gaps remain wide based on level of industrialization and sophistication of technology; created immigration, impact on family, urbanization.