

# The Making of History



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*M.A. Rabie*

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**The Making of History**

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To  
Mohamed Benaissa,  
whose clarity of mind and purity of heart  
have made him a most valuable friend.



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# Introduction

As the twenty-first century begins, societies in all parts of the world seem to be experiencing a loss of direction. The profound transformations spurred by the communications and information revolutions during the last two decades have caused reality and our perceptions of it to change drastically. And because the forces of transformation have continued to gather momentum, our world has been thrown into a transitional period. Most ideas, theories, strategies, and major institutions that helped us manage community life, national economies, politics, and international relations in the recent past have been rendered either irrelevant or inadequate.

Today, every society faces new socioeconomic problems and political challenges that seem hard to define. At the same time, social and economic systems in every society are becoming increasingly complex and interdependent, and globalization is moving beyond the sphere of economics to engulf all other aspects of life. And while older theories, models and strategies are fast becoming outdated, no new ones have emerged to take their place. The order of the day has become one of disorder.

New, rather unconventional trends of change are slowly emerging as powerful forces affecting the nature, pace, and direction of international developments in general and individuals' social and economic conditions in particular. These trends include wider economic integration across state lines, renewed political fragmentation and sometimes disintegration within state lines, and deepened socio-cultural segmentation within societal lines. Because of their disruptive nature and far-reaching

implications, these trends are weakening the nation-state and undermining the cohesiveness of its society and the particularity of its culture.

In the meantime, socioeconomic classes, political plurality, and the middle class, which are the forces most responsible for fostering and sustaining democracy in the industrial world, are being undermined gradually. While societies are slowly being divided into competing socio-cultural groups, the middle class is being weakened and fragmented to the point of losing self-confidence. Traditional democratic institutions are thus no longer able to perform as before, and democracy's promise of justice and equality is fast becoming an illusion.

Changes of this nature and magnitude suggest that the world is passing through a transitional period separating the recent past from the near future. In such a transitional period, the experience and wisdom of the past, and the logic that governed its history become outdated and largely useless. As a result, people are left with few tools to help them understand their present, and with no credible maps to guide them into the future; they have to develop new tools and draw new maps to suit the times.

This book is an attempt to define and explain this transitional period, to reexamine the old map, and to provide a new conception of world history. Because societal maps are complex, the book will also try to reexamine the relevance of some of the major ideas and systems, including ideology and its relation to society, culture and its role in change and development, democracy, the nation-state, and a few others.

I hope that this book will contribute to improving our understanding of our past and present and to fostering our ability to shape a more promising and just future for all.

Washington, D.C.—February 2001.

# Chapter One

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## The Historical Process

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History is the record of past events that are perceived to be important and interesting to most people in the world. It is the story of the development of human societies and their achievements in all fields of human endeavor, and the story of war and its consequences. But since no one can confidently prove or disprove assertions about the past, any conversation about history is necessarily controversial.

Since the acts, ideas, and events that shaped human history were not isolated from one another, the historical record reflects a chain of actions and reactions that form a process of continuous change. This process is an unconscious and unregulated movement of individuals, groups, nations, states, ideas, inventions, cultures, and civilizations toward higher, more complex and often undefined goals and settings. It is a self-propelled process that has no particular point of departure, and no clear destination. As it moves, it causes conflict, effects change, and transforms people's attitudes, perceptions, cultures, and life conditions in ways that do not necessarily reflect the desires or interests of people.

For the historical process to continue, it requires motives to inspire it, forces to lead it, energy to fuel it, and a mechanism to coordinate its many activities. Traditionally, ambitious leaders, active groups, aggressive states, and an uninterrupted stream of new ideas, inventions and ideologies have all played leading roles in motivating and energizing

the historical process. Over time, relationships among these forces have variously been characterized by conflict, competition, and cooperation. Interestingly enough, however, the mechanisms that have managed conflict, effected change, and moved the historical process in a seemingly orderly manner have been created unconsciously. And as the historical process moved forward, it has caused life conditions and the forces that manage them to become more complex. As a result, four major social processes have emerged as independent, yet complementary, forces that together form the mechanism that drives the historical process. They are the socio-cultural process, the political process, the economic process and the information-media or the "infomedia" process.

### **History and the Historian**

History as the record of past events and human accomplishments has been of particular interest to all historical actors. The primary intention of such a record was and still is to glorify victory, idolize leaders, dehumanize the vanquished, and justify the evil acts committed to achieve victory. Since there can be no winners without losers, and no heroes without villains, the vanquished peoples have always felt that history does not treat them fairly. As a result, they continue to criticize historical records, call for their revision, and write their own versions of history. These accounts are almost always substantially different, but not necessarily more accurate, records.

Representatives of the vanquished, the weak, the dissidents, and the minorities in general have engaged in rewriting history to reclaim their rightful place in it. To achieve this objective, they try to view the historical events that have deeply touched their lives from a different moral and philosophical perspective, one that allows them to magnify their own suffering, belittle the victories of their conquerors, blame the victors and oftentimes dehumanize them as well. In fact, the glorification of the self and the demonization of the other are two faces of the same historical view expressed by two peoples facing each other across the confrontation line. History, therefore, is nothing more than

claims and counterclaims, overestimates and underestimates, and exaggerations and falsifications. It leaves the real truth hidden somewhere in between, but nowhere to be found. The conflicts that today characterize ethnic and group relationships in places like former Yugoslavia, Palestine and Rwanda are based on histories that have been distorted, exaggerated or falsified to proclaim innocence, blame the other, or emphasize moral superiority.

Morality, which is an aspect of ideology and culture, has often been the tool used in history to glorify and demonize. While the victors seldom feel the need to justify their victory, the vanquished are always in need of a justification to explain their defeat, and of criteria by which to judge and belittle their conquerors. Throughout history, the vanquished, the weak, and the oppressed nations and minorities of the world have acted as if morality lies exclusively within their domain. Yet judged by today's standards of democracy and human rights, almost all the leaders of the past, both winners and losers, would appear guilty of criminal acts. We would find that personal glory to them was an end that justified all means.

Because history has always been contested, historical "facts" must remain meaningless and unimportant until they are evaluated and placed, along with their consequences, in certain historical perspectives. Every judgment of the past, however, is usually made in light of the present moment as lived and understood by the historian. "We can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present."<sup>1</sup> But these eyes see a particular view that is more relevant to the present than to the past they try to describe. As the present continues to change, it, therefore, causes our view and understanding of the past to change as well.

To provide an example, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt traveled to Israel in 1977 seeking peace with the Jewish state despite the fact that a state of war characterized the relationship between Israel and all Arab states at that time. Since such a trip amounted to *de facto* recognition of the state of Israel, Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular condemned the trip and accused Sadat of treason. Fourteen years later,

almost all Arabs, including the Palestinians, participated in the Madrid Conference for Middle East peace. As a result, most Jewish and Egyptian historians have vindicated Sadat; many have credited him with courage and foresight. Both evaluations of Sadat's trip, however, were expressed in light of their own context and time. If we look at Sadat's trip from a wider, more reflective historical perspective, both images of Sadat as traitor and as visionary would appear subjective and incomplete.

Sadat's trip to Israel in 1977 was motivated by self-interest and a strong desire to regain lost Egyptian territory, and not by a desire to commit treason against other Arab states. But by signing a separate peace treaty with Israel in 1979, Sadat caused the Arab position *vis-a-vis* Israel to be vastly weakened; he practically eliminated all non-political options. Sadat, therefore, was neither a traitor nor a visionary, but rather a politician who sought to maximize his gain regardless of his action's consequences for others.

Many people and numerous historians seem to think that history holds the secret to understanding human development and to identifying the major forces that tend to shape human life and influence its future course. Because of this belief, theories of history were, and continue to be, written to explain the nature of the historical process, its course, its direction, and its perceived final destination.

Historians of each era can be divided into three categories: adherents to the dominant ideology of the time, critics of it, and observers claiming neutrality. Historians in the first category tend to be apologists for, if not promoters of, the prevailing ideology. Critics and opponents of the prevailing ideology, in contrast, tend to see the shortcomings and excesses of history as well as the sins and follies of its leaders. Meanwhile, historians who claim neutrality usually see history as a powerful force that does not differentiate between its subjects. They tend to see most leaders as less than heroes but more than demons, and losers as neither mere victims nor innocent bystanders. Neutrality, however, is impossible to maintain, particularly in cases where people, their values and belief systems are at issue. Every historian, in fact, has his or her own

worldview, values, and cultural background against which he or she intentionally or unintentionally judges the subjects of the investigation and their legacies. As a result, historical records produced by the “unbiased” historian are models that may approach reality but can never actually reflect it.

Whatever one reads is important; it usually affects his life and his outlook. But where that person lives and his cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds are much more important to whatever he reads; they affect the way he interprets what he reads and how to use it. Because of the vast differences among people’s cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and worldviews, historians continue to write controversial histories that tend to deepen animosity and suspicion among peoples.

Although the historian “strives constantly to transcend his own present to recapture the past, to suppress his own personality in order to give life to generations long dead,”<sup>2</sup> he is a product of his own times and environment. He is a product of the culture and the particular ideology to which he owes his personality and intellectual qualities. Since cultures, ideologies, and human environments continue to be transformed, every generation of historians is expected to produce a new history that reflects the spirit of its time and cultural biases of the individual historian. Historians, no matter how hard they may try to transcend their present to recapture a past they never lived through, are destined to produce history that is neither complete nor truly factual. Two historians writing about the same era or nation are likely to produce different histories. Thus, the history of every era and every nation is an ever-evolving, never completed story. Every history, therefore, must be viewed as tentative, incomplete, and open to revision.

“Any work of history is vulnerable on three counts,” says Gertrude Himmelfarb. “The fallibility and deficiency of the historical record on which it is based; the fallibility and selectivity inherent in the writing of history, and the fallibility and subjectivity of historians.”<sup>3</sup> Consensus among historians is rather rare, coming about only in regard to histories that are long past, whose ideology is long dead, and which have little contemporary political impact. Since there is no historical truth,

good historians are only able to convey the spirit, the culture, the technology, and the general life conditions of times past.

R.G. Collingwood mandates that “the understanding of the past in a properly historical way requires, on the part of the historian, a re-enactment of past experience or re-thinking of past thought.”<sup>4</sup> But neither the re-enactment of past experience nor the re-thinking of past thought with any certainty is humanly possible. No historian can say with certainty, therefore, what happened in the past, why it happened, and how it may be of benefit to us.

Collingwood makes no distinction between an action and its causes. He claims that “when the historian knows what happened, he already knows why it happened.”<sup>5</sup> Historical facts to Collingwood are thus the end rather than the beginning of historical inquiry. He further claims that “the full description of an action is at the same time its explanation.”<sup>6</sup> But the description of an action that happened in the past can never be complete, nor can it be accurate. Once again, perhaps only a historian who can relive a particular past in his or her own memories—despite the passing of time—is able to describe that past, understand it, and draw valuable conclusions from it.

### **The Historical Connection**

Historians in general have some type of connection to the histories they take as their major subjects of inquiry. Chinese historians, for example, write more about the history of China than about the histories of Russia and Japan combined. Israelis are more interested in Jewish history and in the history of Arabs in general than in French or British history. Connections can be cultural, political, ideological and/or circumstantial. Historians interested in the history of world civilization in particular strive to transcend their own cultures, ideologies, and circumstances to view the world as one entity and its development as a coherent historical movement.

Since this book is about the making of history and about the transformation of its civilizations, I feel the need to explain my own

connection to this history. I have been fortunate enough to experience first-hand the history of human civilization and witness some of its most important events and transitional periods. My writing, therefore, is not strictly a matter of imagination or curiosity.

I was born in an agricultural community where neither electricity nor running water nor modern sanitation was available. People and animals were used to plow the land, plant the seeds, harvest the products, and transport them to local markets. The community in which I was born was probably quite similar to a typical agricultural community in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As I was growing up and becoming aware of my social and economic environments, war erupted and caused my family and most of my generation to become refugees. The refugee camp in which I spent about five years of my youth was outside an agricultural town at the edge of a vast, desolate desert. For about three years, my older sister and I were assigned by our father the task of spending the weekends roaming the neighboring desert to collect the dry and dying bushes and shrubs needed to make a fire for cooking. During winter and the early weeks of spring, the task was expanded to include the collection of wild vegetables to feed the family. Two of these vegetables are now domesticated, and every time I eat them I remember the days and events of a childhood lived as a hunter and gatherer. Other circumstances surrounding my life led me to share with nomads their food, listen to their songs and life stories, observe their daily life, and even go with shepherds about their daily tasks. It was a life that represented what history books tell us was the first stage of development of human society on its way to civilization.

By the time I entered high school, my family had moved to the neighboring agricultural town. However, all nine of us lived in a one-bedroom apartment that had none of the basic modern amenities. The family, moreover, had neither the money nor the space to buy a desk, a table, a chair, or any piece of furniture that is today taken for granted in most agricultural societies. My father rented and cultivated a small piece of land on which we lived and whose produce provided most of

the food the family needed for survival and a little money to support a mostly subsistence life.

Upon graduation from high school, I received a scholarship from the United Nations to live and study in one of the largest and most vibrant cities of the Third World. In that city, I observed affluence and abject poverty coexisting side by side and watched modern and primitive cultures living their separate lives. Third World nationalism and socialism were thriving along with anti-imperialism in an atmosphere that inspired the young and gave hope to the deprived. It was only there that I was able to live in a house with electricity, running water, modern sanitation, and even a refrigerator.

Five years later, I traveled to Germany, where I witnessed and participated in the so-called "German Economic Miracle." In Germany, I pursued a graduate degree and worked part-time in a publishing house. In the mid-1960s I moved to the United States where I completed my higher education, received a Ph.D. degree in economics and taught at few American universities. Since then, my life has been an ever-evolving story, taking me to many more interesting places and enabling me to look back at the primitive roots from where I started and explore the unknown future in my thoughts and ways of living. My perspective thus goes beyond the ups and downs of ordinary life in one society or one era, and my connections to all the places and historical phases I have experienced first-hand continue to fascinate me and challenge my intellectual capacities.

### **Historical Discontinuity**

The claim made by the title of Francis Fukuyama's 1992 study *The End of History and the Last Man* is not quite right. What has actually ended is not history *per se*, but the role of history in explaining the present and guiding the future. This assertion no doubt calls for an explanation, which will require an examination of the major historical forces and their roles in the development of human societies.

People everywhere, instead of basking in the security of the known, seem to be experiencing one crisis after another; they are unsure of the present and fearful of the future. The world of the early 1990s went through a historical discontinuity that disrupted the historical process and dissolved the connection between the immediate past and the near future. The history of the past was coming to an end while the history of the future had not begun, leaving the present with no identity of its own. The present was reduced by the circumstances to a mere port where the past was ending its long journey and the future was beginning its own voyage. This process has not ended.

A careful look at the political map of the world as we enter the twenty-first century reveals that almost every country faces certain political, economic and/or social problems. None of these troubled countries, including the richest and most powerful one, seems to know with confidence how to deal with its problems or how to restructure its fractured or embattled social, economic and/or political systems. In addition, the traditional tools of economic analysis and business management, as well as the means of gaining and maintaining political control, seem to have become inadequate. As Robert Reich wrote recently, "the pilots of the economy have never been here before. All of the old rules seem to be obsolete, and there are no maps and no guides."<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the complexity of life has rendered the nation-state, regardless of its size, power, and wealth, too small to handle most international problems and too big to deal with most domestic issues. A rupture in our human historical process seems to have occurred. The past is of little help in guiding us into the future; and the future is less certain as judged by the past. The present, as a result, seems to have gotten lost between a largely discarded past and an unborn future. And while the present was traditionally considered an extension of the past, it has become more responsive to the future, as projected by the futurists, the advertisers, and the many technological and scientific trends. The future, meanwhile, remains uncharted; it appears to have become independent of both past and present.

This discontinuity is a unique development that makes our experience similar to that of a driver entering an unfamiliar mountainous terrain. As the driver takes a long curve on the winding road, he loses sight of the familiar landscape that lies behind him, while the mountains he negotiates block his view of the landscape that lies ahead. As his speed and control of the vehicle become subject to the rough terrain, his expectations and confidence become subject to the ups and downs of the winding road. The familiar landscape no longer guides or even helps; the horizon is so vast and obscured it provides little or no clues to what lies ahead.

This book, is, in part, an attempt to explain this historical discontinuity and clarify its meaning by placing it in its proper historical perspective. Recognizing the contributions of others and building upon their historical studies, I shall try to map the road that got us where we are today. Using my own ideas and life experience, I will try to outline a vision of where we are expected to go from here. In doing so, I hope to be able to define the nature of the historical process, to identify its major forces of change and transformation, and to explain the structure of the development of human societies.

Richard Rubenstein argues that existing social theories have failed to develop an adequate concept of the individual in society. He believes that there is a need for a new theory to help us understand the world in which we live.<sup>8</sup> The theory we need is one that can help us see and understand the nature of inter-system relationships so that we may be able to develop a sense of where we are going and how we can manage processes of social transformation. In other words, there is a need for a theory that can tie the present to the future, rather than to the past, so that we may predict the outcome of change, define the future, and participate in shaping it.

Robert Artigiani wrote recently, "History teaches us to analyze the processes facilitating social revolution instead of trying to identify a vision of a feasible and desirable future."<sup>9</sup> If we cannot know the future," he added, "we are inescapably part of a present allowing no moral alternative to action."<sup>10</sup> While it is important to know history

and learn its valuable lessons, we must realize that we cannot and should not be prisoners of our history. Change may be provoked by history and the collective memories it usually nurtures, but progress cannot be made without focusing our eyes on the future.

### **The Historical Process**

Since the dawn of history, humanity has formed societies with the primary objective of reaching higher levels of security and satisfaction. At the beginning, the pace of change was very slow, making societies seem stagnant and time motionless. But as peoples attained higher levels of development, the pace of change accelerated and life became more complex and demanding. Complexity, in turn, presented more challenges to face, more issues to deal with, more desires to satisfy, more opportunities to exploit, and more change to endure. In turn, more players came to participate in the shaping of societal life, and it came to be organized in ways that made people and their social systems more and more interdependent.

As societies change and move from one stage of development to another, societal life becomes more complex. These stages are tied to one another by transitional periods that connect the past to the present and the present to the future. Since each successive stage represents a more developed and more complex type of society, transitional periods represent discontinuities rather than smooth links between the past and the future, or between one stage of development and the ones that precede and follow it.

During transitional periods, certain agents of social and/or technological change become more active than usual, and new agents of change arise and intervene, causing the pace of change to accelerate. As a result, the pillars of stability in society, particularly established values, traditions, and systems, are undermined. Stability is replaced by instability, certainty by uncertainty, and confusion and fear of the unknown become prevalent. Many people are thus impelled to resist

change and even to struggle to abort the process of transformation and reverse its direction.

Throughout history, humankind has demonstrated a remarkable ability to learn, accumulate knowledge, and use it to better life conditions in general. Societies have seldom failed to use the accomplishments of each passing stage as a foundation on which to build new social and economic systems, produce more and better products, reorganize economic life and social relationships, and attain higher standards of living. Such progress, however, has never been accomplished without inviting conflict and causing unrelated changes. Conflict and change, therefore, keep shaping and reshaping human life, resulting in an ever-evolving world of increasing complexity over time.

In most cases and times, as societies changed, higher levels of security and satisfaction were attained and more knowledge was accumulated and made readily available to serve succeeding generations. Edward Gibbon said, "We may acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue of the human race."<sup>11</sup> But with every new age, life has become more complicated and knowledge more sophisticated and specialized, causing our ability and skill to produce and use knowledge to become more decisive in making further socioeconomic progress. Yet this knowledge and the skills associated with it have always been unevenly distributed both within and among societies. There is a knowledge gap between those who know and others who know less, and those who know less are less able to compete in an increasingly dynamic society. Continued change, moreover, has caused this gap to widen and deepen.

As knowledge increases in society, it becomes more institutionalized and important, causing the influence of institutions to increase and that of the individual to decline. And as institutions and social systems increase in numbers and complexity, change becomes multifaceted, uncontrollable and unpredictable; it affects all aspects of life. The people most involved with the production and application of knowledge are likely to change faster, to benefit more, and to achieve

higher standards of living, causing socioeconomic and socio-cultural gaps within and between societies to widen further.

Historical records indicate that humanity has passed through numerous stages of development on its way to the current age. Although it is believed that the first human society with a family organization and a language appeared about 95,000 years ago, the first society with a food economy appeared about 30,000 years ago only. For roughly 20,000 years thereafter, human societies were small, made up of bands and tribes that lived a nomadic life as animal hunters and food gatherers rather than food producers. But by organizing into small groups of hunters, people were able to improve their ability to hunt and use the meat of animals for food, the skin and fur for clothing, and certain bones as tools.<sup>12</sup> A new archaeological discovery made in 1996 seems to indicate that humans developed an appreciation for music more than 30,000 years ago and used animal bones to make a musical instrument that could play more than one musical note.

About 10,000 years ago, humans were able to domesticate several plants and animals and use them and their products for a variety of purposes. Animals were employed to ease the burden of migration, to carry food across inhospitable terrain, and to increase man's mobility and ability to launch and fight wars. The domestication of plants on the other hand, enabled man to produce food in relatively large quantities; it was probably the single most important development in human history. It enabled people to attain a substantial degree of security and independence from nature, and paved the way for human societies to settle and grow. Populations began to grow faster, cities to be built, states to be established, and what is called civilization to appear and flourish.

Beginning 30,000 years ago, human societies have continued to develop and become more complex. They started with the primitive tribal society, passed through traditional agricultural society, and were followed by the relatively dynamic industrial society. Today, certain industrial societies are moving quickly into the still-evolving, but very

dynamic, knowledge society. Each successive society represents a civilizational stage that is profoundly different from the preceding one.

### **“Culture” and “Civilization”**

The words “culture” and “civilization” are often used interchangeably, and oftentimes assumed that they have the same meaning. Though the terms have similar definitions, their connotations represent distinct concepts. Explaining the meaning of each word and the importance of its connotation requires an explanation of how the two words relate to each other in a historical context. Such a clarification is important to understanding the course of human development over time and to identifying the issues causing cultures to misunderstand each other and at times to clash with one another.

Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary defines “civilization” as an advanced state of human society, in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and government has been reached.” An alternate definition refers to “modern comforts and conveniences, as made possible by science and technology.”<sup>13</sup> As for “culture,” it is defined as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.”<sup>14</sup> In general, culture stands for the way of life that a group follows, and defines the social cement that binds its members together.<sup>15</sup>

The first definition of civilization as the achievement of “a high level of culture, science, industry and government” classes culture, just like science and industry, as only one component of civilization, rather than its equal or its other face. This definition also suggests that culture does not include science, industry or government; presumably, it includes only such intangibles that may be transmitted from one generation to another as traditions, customs, literature, beliefs, and value systems. Culture, writes Constantine Zurayk, is “the sum of the creative achievements of the human spirit in society.”<sup>16</sup> Or, in Thomas Sowell’s formulation, culture “involves attitudes as well as skills, languages, and customs.”<sup>17</sup> Michael Naumann, Germany’s Minister for

Cultural and Media Affairs, said in 2000 that “culture is a symbol for spiritual innovation, for satirical laughter, for imagination, for intellectual challenge—but also for comfort, for relaxation and for all those forms of entertainment that do not automatically dull people’s minds.”<sup>18</sup> Since civilization includes culture, and culture is only one component of civilization, neither concept should be used to refer to the other.

The definition of culture, on the other hand, concerns itself with the quality rather than the quantity of what a society has developed over time in the visual arts, literature, values and similar fields of human endeavor. It refers to “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings,” interacting with each other in what is called society. This suggests that culture includes all traditions, customs, attitudes, laws, belief systems, worldviews, social institutions, and relationships developed by a group of people or by a nation over time and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture, therefore, is particular, rather than universal. It is a product of one people living and working together for a long time in what we call society.

“Civilization,” which refers to both the quality and quantity of human achievements, is a product of people’s interaction with nature over long periods of time and in countless places. It tends to underline the comforts of life that are attainable through industry, science, technology, as well as culture. These are developments that in and of themselves reflect the accumulation of knowledge developed by all peoples throughout history. Because the interaction of humanity with nature is meant to discover nature’s secrets and laws and exploit its resources, economic factors and technology become decisive forces in making and shaping civilizations. Civilization, therefore, is produced by humanity and belongs to all peoples; culture is produced by a society and belongs to one nation. Consequently, culture is more particular and portable, while civilization is more global and non-transferable—the first is communal; the second, universal.

It is clear from the above explanation that civilization includes the material and non-material achievements of all peoples, including

culture, while culture is confined to the non-material accomplishments of one people only. Since culture is a component of civilization and one of its many aspects, a civilization can and does produce more than one culture. Being an attribute of one civilization, culture owes its very existence and basic traits to the particular civilization that produced it, and not to any other one.

Because cultures are products and attributes of civilizations, their developments follow that of their mother civilizations. This is not to say that cultures do not influence or impact the development of their own civilizations. On the contrary, after a civilization is fully developed, its cultural component assumes an active role in shaping the direction and influencing the pace of change in society. Cultures, being the sum total of ways of living, shape the way younger generations think, influencing their attitudes towards other cultures, the environment, science and technology, industry, the workplace, education and other peoples. The most important elements of culture, I believe, are the values it espouses and the attitudes it impels people to adopt, particularly toward the environment, science and technology, and the pursuit of happiness and material gain.

Being a product of people's interactions with one another, the development of culture had to await the formation of societies. Only after agriculture was developed and human settlements appeared did culture begin to develop in a systematic way and influence change in society. Since the age of agriculture had gone on for about ten thousand years before the industrial revolution began, all cultures produced during that time were products of one single civilization, the agricultural one, and therefore were similar to one another. "Until comparatively recently in human history, all humans had the same subsistence pattern. In a certain sense, they all shared a similar, though not identical culture."<sup>19</sup> Describing life conditions and the way of life in Pacoma, a village in Bolivia, Jack Weatherford wrote, "In many ways Pacoma seems typical of village life across South America as well as throughout India, China and Sub-Saharan Africa."<sup>20</sup>

Each of the so-called civilizations of the ancient past is acknowledged as such because of its noted achievements in culture, economics, science, technology, and political as well as military organization. All great civilizations, regardless of their time, duration, or comparative level of achievements, have produced a refined culture in the form of works of art, literature and architecture, and behavior and belief. No group of people was able to join the ranks of the acknowledged civilized nations at any time without enjoying a noteworthy cultural life.

Cultures, therefore, are products of civilizations; and their levels of achievement, consequently, are functions of the achievements of the civilizations that produce them. Advanced civilizations produce refined cultures, and refined cultures reflect the achievements of advanced civilizations. The material and non-material achievements of civilizations thus go hand in hand, and their internal dynamics and mutual influence are what make progress, stagnation and/or regression possible.

### **Culture in Historical Perspective**

Most social scientists and intellectuals of the Third World, particularly those belonging to older nations and great empires of the past, claim that Western civilization is primarily a civilization of material and technological achievements, but of little cultural progress. They argue that human relations in Western societies in general, and in the United States in particular, are superficial, lacking passion and sincerity and, therefore, such relations reflect a lack of real, refined culture. But in so claiming, those intellectuals conveniently forget to mention superior Western cultural achievements in the visual arts, music, literature, education, and architecture, in addition to their development and espousal of individual freedoms and human rights.

Although human relations in Third World countries in general are more personal and warmer and tend to be sincere and passionate, it is doubtful that such relations are always stronger or necessarily better than those prevalent in the West. In fact, human relations in a large Third World city like Lagos, Cairo, Manila, Calcutta, Mexico City, or

Sao Paulo seem to be not only less conducive to change and development, but also less personal and passionate than those in a small Greek, Spanish or British town. A United Nations study declared recently that Manila and Bangkok have more in common with Tokyo and Washington than with their rural hinterlands.

Third World theorists making the arguments about the lack of culture in the West, tend to acknowledge, though unconsciously, that cultures are products of civilizations, and that an industrial civilization produces cultures that give more importance to the material aspects of life. While successive civilizations have produced their own cultures, every successive culture has been less personal and more materialistic than the one that preceded it. What causes human relations to become less personal and passionate and more formal and superficial are powerful social forces that include urbanization, industrialization, population growth, migration, and the diversification of interests and careers. Human relations and the social organizations of today are, as they were in the past, functions of environmental settings, human needs, beliefs, and economic interests and modes of production. They cannot, therefore, be expected to continue unmodified while beliefs, needs, economic activities, and interests change and multiply.

While some Third World intellectuals and humanists accuse Western cultures and societies of becoming materialistic, some Western intellectuals accuse the descendants of the great empires of the past of becoming the new barbarians of the present.<sup>21</sup> Although both sides are dead wrong, such claims and accusations continue to be made and believed. Deeply rooted mutual prejudices and a failure to understand the dynamics of cultural change allow such claims and accusations to be made and spread.

Most Third World peoples view Western cultures as alien ways of living that grew out of a colonialist mentality and are therefore inherently imperialistic, rather than humanistic. Since Western cultures are centuries ahead of Third World cultures in general, they are difficult for Third World peoples to understand and appreciate. On the other hand, Third World cultures are old; they stem largely from primitive

needs and traditional belief systems and are therefore more personal and simple. These cultures predate the industrial revolution, and the Enlightenment age and, because of that, are difficult for Westerners to understand and appreciate.

Understanding a different culture that is old or new cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted without placing that particular culture in its proper historical and civilizational context. A culture of an agricultural society like Mexico is based more on values than on interests. It is more reflective of basic human needs and fears, more conservative, and more passionate, but less sophisticated and open than an industrial culture. While every civilization, starting with the pre-agricultural one had its own cultures and unique economic and political organizations, no society could or did move from one stage of development to another directly or promptly; all societies had to go through difficult transitional periods that represented historical discontinuities. Each transitional period, while signaling the end of one civilization and the birth of another, is rife with all the apprehension and changed expectations that usually accompany birth and death.

Historians and other social scientists, using various models and criteria, have defined several stages of human development. Some have made the list lengthy; others have abbreviated it. However, each social scientist seems to acknowledge that the two greatest revolutions in human history so far were the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. They also acknowledge that those two revolutions have had the greatest impact on human ways of life. There also seems to be consensus on at least three major stages of human development, the pre-agricultural, or the hunting and gathering stage, the agricultural, and the industrial.

Changes that certain industrial societies, particularly the American society, began to experience in the late 1980s have led some thinkers to herald the arrival of a new stage of human development. This new, yet to be defined age is often referred to as the post-industrial age, or the information age. I prefer the formulation "age of knowledge," because it is knowledge, including recent scientific discoveries and technological

developments, their economic applications, and their social implications, that are fundamentally changing people's ways and conditions of living.

A careful analysis of these stages should make it possible to place all major social transformations in their proper historical context and thus enable us to track the process of human development over time. The intended analysis, however, is not meant to recount history or underline the accomplishments of the various stages. The sole purpose is to find the particular thread that runs throughout all stages, forming the continuous human movement we call the "historical process."

## Chapter Two

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### Stages of Historical Development

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Historical records seem to suggest that long before the development of agriculture, human beings were able to get enough food and had attained a level of physical security sufficient for survival. Familial and tribal ties as well as social customs, norms, and traditions had acted as the glue that held early societies together and gave meaning to their communal lives. This simply means that civilization came into existence thousands of years before the dawn of the age of agriculture and the establishment of human settlements. It was, though, a primitive civilization based on a food economy that depended primarily on the hunting of animals and the collecting of wild fruits and vegetables. Societies in that civilization were made up of bands and tribes living a nomadic life, and cultures consisted of little more than customs and traditions. The economic life and social organization of these early societies were simple and informal and, because of that, they remained largely unchanged for countless generations.

With the development of agriculture some 10,000 years ago, the economic base of life began to change and with it, the culture and the social and political organization. “Plant and animal domestication meant much more food and hence much denser human populations. The resulting food surpluses and (in some areas) the animal-based means of transporting those surpluses, were a prerequisite for the

development of settled, politically centralized, socially stratified, economically complex, technologically innovative societies.”<sup>22</sup> However, after agriculture was established and its culture fully developed, the new way of life began to change only very slowly. Socioeconomic forces of change were either vastly restricted or yet to be born. The most important change during the later centuries of the agricultural era was the expansion of trade, the incorporation of merchant life into the economic life of society, and the emergence of states and empires. Tradable products subsequently became a growing economic activity, and this, in turn, caused services to expand and social change to evolve gradually and systematically.

About two and a half centuries ago, the production of manufactured products emerged in England as the most important, though not the largest, economic activity. This heralded the coming of a new age, the age of industry, and the dawn of rapid socioeconomic, socio-political and technological change. The coming together of major economic, social, cultural, scientific, and technological developments is what we call the Industrial Revolution. It was a revolution that changed the economic base of life and its mode of production, forcing all other social and political organizations and human relations in general to change drastically and irreversibly. The Industrial Revolution represented a forceful and continuous process of socioeconomic transformation. “Our fathers,” wrote Charles Van Doren, “started the revolution and we are still living it. We could not stop it even if we wanted to.”<sup>23</sup>

In the late 1980s, industrial society in general and the American society in particular began to experience a new type of fundamental change, or revolution. This new revolution—what I call the “Knowledge Revolution”—was mainly the result of the economy shifting quickly from the production of tradable goods to the production of tradable information and services. In the United States, “service employment has continued to grow, to the point where it now accounts for 80 percent of employment. More people are working in doctors’ offices than in auto plants, more in laundries and dry cleaners than in steel mills.”<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the Knowledge Revolution began to force itself

on society and impose its own logic on the prevailing way of living, causing all aspects of life to undergo fundamental change.

### **The Age of Hunting and Gathering**

This age lasted longer than any other age, having probably started more than 30,000 years ago and continued until the development of agriculture some 20,000 years later. The domestication of animals, which occurred at around the same time as the domestication of plants, gave this age and its social organization a new meaning. It strengthened its economic base and enabled it to further develop its society and culture. Domesticated animals, which made tribal life possible and sustainable, were put to good use. The meat of some was used for food, the skin and fur of others for clothing. The bones of some animals served other purposes, providing tools, weapons and ornaments. People employed domesticated animals, specifically the camel and the horse, as means of transportation, making it easier for them to move across difficult terrain and interact peacefully or otherwise with other tribes. However, the intellectual horizon of tribal people was "limited to their allegiance and their loyalties, which extended no further than the tribe, and was directed towards the smaller family group in the first instance."<sup>25</sup>

Culture in this age was not much more than a tribal way of life, whose essence was based on age-old customs and traditions and a history of feuding with other tribes. In this society, the socio-cultural process governed the pace and determined the direction of change for thousands of years to come without much challenge. Economic stagnation and lack of political organization made change difficult to conceive and initiate.

Members of each tribe were tied to each other by blood and kinship relationships; they all believed and largely behaved as if they were members of one large family sharing the same destiny. While blood and kinship ties guaranteed tribal solidarity, an extensive but simple network of traditions and customs provided social homogeneity and

harmony. Similar attitudes and behavioral patterns, and almost identical life experiences, served to weaken individuality while strengthening tribal unity.

The strength of internal solidarity reflected an almost equal tribal enmity toward the outside. Relationships between tribes were and still are built on suspicion, hostility, old feuds, and a strong desire to avenge real and perceived past injuries to tribal pride and honor. Tribes raided each other for a reason and often for no reason at all. Hostility toward others was and still is, as the Rwanda, Burundi, and Somalia tragedies of the 1990s sadly demonstrated, an important aspect of the tribal way of life. Contact between different tribes almost always meant war, whose consequences were recognized and largely accepted by everyone as normal. Looting of property and kidnapping and raping of women was a part of the tribal way of life and a source of individual as well as collective pride and satisfaction.

During this stage, the basic and most important goals of survival and physical security were improved but remained vastly constrained by nature, which set the limits and defined the space of social and economic maneuverability. Because nature was the major defining force in this age, and because the limits set by nature were comparable in most regions of the ancient world, nature produced similar, but not identical, patterns of living. Consequently, tribal cultures displayed similar characteristics in content, attitude, and outlook; they all lived in the same civilization and had similar internal as well as external dynamics. The way of life of an African tribe has been found to be similar to that of a Middle Eastern tribe, which resembled the life of Asian, Australian, European and Mexican tribes. "Many events in human history seem to correlate very remarkably with environmental controls...The historical theory that ascribes many events in the human record to environmental causes thus receives powerful support from geology."<sup>26</sup>

Environments, however, have been different in geography and topography, as well as in their endowment of plants and animals that lend themselves to domestication. Because of this diversity, argues

Jared Diamond, some regions were able to develop first and make more progress than others. "Hence the availability of domestic plants and animals ultimately explains why empires, literacy, and steel weapons developed earlier in Eurasia and later, or not at all, on other continents."<sup>27</sup>

In addition, nature and the dictates of a largely nomadic life denied people the opportunity to establish roots in any one place; people had no attachment to any particular country and were unable to develop a sense of belonging to a larger society or a nation. The family house, usually a tent, was the space to which tribal people exhibited the most attachment, and the tribe was the nation to which they belonged and to whose customs and social organization they gave allegiance.

About 10,000 years ago, man began to domesticate plants and develop agriculture. Although no one knows how this discovery came about, historical records strongly suggest that agriculture was first practiced in present-day Iraq, Palestine/Israel and Egypt. From there, it traveled slowly to other Asian, African, and European countries. It is also believed that agriculture may have developed independently in other regions of the world, particularly in China and New Guinea. It is significant that "the long transition from foraging to agricultural life...happened in several places seemingly independently, yet within a few thousand years of one another."<sup>28</sup> Year-round warm weather and the abundance of water, fertile land, and animals made a semi-nomadic but localized tribal life possible. And this, in turn, seems to have enabled man to observe nature closely, follow and understand its seasonal course, and ultimately discover the life cycle of plants.

### **The Age of Agriculture**

The development of agriculture instigated the most important revolution in human history. It changed both the state of living, or the economic conditions of life, and the way of living, or the culture, of the agricultural society. It transformed human relations and the way societies were organized, as well as the relationships of people to one another and to

their environment. It brought about a new civilization with its own cultures, its own social and political organization, and its own economy. "The change from hunting and gathering to agriculture involved more than a mere change in subsistence pattern; it represented a complete change in the social and cultural fabric of life."<sup>29</sup> It "meant also a mental change."<sup>30</sup>

As agriculture was becoming a way of life, permanent human settlements began to grow and spread, and people began to build houses and make roots in scattered hamlets and small villages. With agriculture, the ability to produce enough food to support a subsistence living was no longer in doubt. Because of that assurance, the importance of survival as an existential issue was vastly reduced. Consequently, the rationale of the old life of the wanderer in constant search of food was ended and the building of civilization begun.

The building of permanent human settlements transformed all aspects of human life, not only food production. It changed the economic base, creating new activities over which man had some control, and gave domesticated animals an added role in the new economy, particularly in cultivating the land and transporting agricultural products. It also caused land to acquire a new meaning and a new role, forcing societies to reorganize themselves socially, politically and economically on new bases and in response to a new reality. "Compared with the thousands of years humans spent foraging, the construction of villages represented another revolutionary change in culture, subsistence, technology, social organization and history."<sup>31</sup>

The cultivation of land on a permanent basis caused people to develop a strong attachment to their environment and to acquire a sense of belonging to a larger society. As a result, people began to build new tools and social relations, develop new traditions and values, initiate new internal and external relationships, and accumulate more wealth, both portable and non-portable. Learning from their own experience and from the environment, people also began to develop and accumulate knowledge. This caused desires and needs to grow slowly and gradually in ways that affected people's way of living. And

this, in turn, served to introduce the idea of progress in human life, although this concept had to wait until the eighteenth century to be recognized and articulated by liberal thinkers of the Enlightenment. Consequently, change began to accelerate the pace of development in three major areas:

1. State building, which led to the emergence and then to the strengthening of the political process as a social force of change and transformation.
2. Expansion of trade, which created a need for the production of new, tradable products and paved the way for the eventual emergence of the economic process.
3. Development of tools and other means of production, which led to increasing productivity in general and to facilitating trade and governance in particular, and paved the way for the introduction of a new technological element to the human environment.

The newly developed human settlements, however, were easy targets for roaming tribesmen, particularly since most settlements were small villages and isolated hamlets. And because the core purpose of an agricultural community was and still is to cultivate the land, not fight wars, the new society's capacity to protect itself against invaders was limited. In fact, mobility of fighting forces, which tribesmen enjoyed, has served as an advantage in all wars throughout history. Meanwhile, the sharing of water resources among neighboring communities, the need to resolve conflict among families and clans, and the security imperative to protect trade routes were creating a need for a social superstructure to manage inter-community relations and provide much-needed order and collective security. Consequently, the state system evolved as a superstructure, having the authority and legitimacy to govern and influence the direction of change. Subsequently, the state began to build cities as trade and political centers and to form armies and bureaucracies to collect taxes and build empires that controlled larger areas and differentiated regions and communities, which, in turn, enabled the political process to enhance its societal role.

The development of the agricultural economy and the state superstructure moved together; they reinforced each other, giving the new civilization its cultural and non-cultural characteristics. One other force that played an important role in the development of both state and culture was religion. Religion, as will be explained in Chapter Seven, was an important cultural product of the age of agriculture. It came in response to certain human needs, particularly the inability of people to explain nature, its workings, and many of its manifestations. Religion was also sought to provide ethical and legal codes of conduct needed to institutionalize and coordinate social relations, especially during the early stages of community life, when the state was still unborn or ineffective.

The so-called great civilizations of the distant past, such as the Greek, Egyptian, Chinese, and Islamic, were in reality different cultures produced by one civilization. All of them appeared during the age of agriculture, had almost the same economic base, and developed in remarkably similar patterns. Even the fall of the empires they came to represent followed almost the same pattern and was caused by similar forces and circumstances. Although referring to such states of human living as civilizations is inaccurate, it is difficult and probably inadvisable to refer to them merely as cultures because of the legacy they claimed in history books, in literature, and in our minds.

Nevertheless, it must be made clear that all of the pre-industrial "civilizations" belonged to one civilizational context, the agricultural one, and were very similar in content, character, and socio-political organization. In fact, probably until the middle of the nineteenth century, the way of living in a typical Egyptian, Indian, Chinese or Mexican village was not much different from that of a small village in Spain, Ireland or Greece. A visit to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam will reveal that the artist's paintings depicting rural, and particularly domestic life in Holland, France and Belgium in the 1880s could have been done a century later in either Thailand, Mexico or Morocco.

While the same economic base caused these nations to belong to the same civilization and exhibit its life pattern, differences in environmental settings and outside challenges led these nations to develop slightly different cultures. "The ways in which different societies responded to...challenges distinguished Chinese civilization from that of the Aztecs, or Egyptian civilization from that of India.... [P]roblems produced unique responses and further differentiated one culture from another."<sup>32</sup>

During the agricultural age, the tribe and its traditional way of life lost most of their meaning and reasons for being. The extended family, or the clan, replaced the tribe and became the basic social unit of the agricultural community, which consisted of a few clans. Each clan had its own head; he was often chosen because of his acknowledged wisdom, rather than his fighting qualities. And since authority rested with the same man, the main role of the clan head was to maintain clannishness, manage conflict with other clans, and mediate between his clan and the state authority. In addition, most non-economic life activities were performed in the family house, not outside it.

After the state superstructure was firmly established, all tribal and agricultural communities became part of it. But the tribal society, due to its nature and function, could not develop a sense of belonging to the larger society or have allegiance to the state superstructure. It continued to be a force of disruption that was hard to tame. And when the old empires showed signs of fatigue, the tribal society intervened to hasten their disintegration and ultimate downfall.

Due to these developments, the logic that governed tribal life during the previous age lost its relevance, and the old civilization and its cultural patterns became outdated and relatively less civilized. Thus, the history of hunting and gathering ended as the agricultural age was emerging and its new civilization was being born. Although tribal history would retain much of its logic within its own civilizational circles for thousands of years to come, it lost, under the state superstructure, much of its land and freedom and, thus, its momentum. It was forced

to adopt a circular movement within an increasingly smaller and more confined physical and political space.

Consequently, tribal society, being less free and less able to provide for itself as before, became dependent on agricultural society. And as the first lost much of its momentum and freedom of action, its ability to challenge the second declined; it could only retain a capacity to disrupt the life of the agricultural society and temporarily impede its development and slow its growth. Even when the tribal society did invade, loot, and destroy an empire and cause its demise, like it did to the Roman and Chinese empires, it did not and could not reverse the historical process. In fact, the conquerors, being less economically independent and productive and less culturally refined, were absorbed by the conquered people who were more economically productive and culturally refined.

Agriculture, by enhancing economic and personal security, gave people more time to think and led them to discover the idea of one God, develop religion, and build the social and physical infrastructure of society. As land cultivation and ownership obliged people to settle in one place for several generations, the seasonal nature of agricultural production encouraged communities to cooperate with each other and seek peaceful coexistence with one another. Trade and the desire to expand it, moreover, dictated that merchants and communities develop mutually beneficial relationships under the supervision of the state. And because they shared some interests and had similar cultures, agricultural communities had little difficulty establishing workable means of communication among themselves based on mutual trust; language differences and a scattered existence did not present insurmountable obstacles. But since their cultures were, and still are, different from those produced by a less sophisticated tribal civilization, they had difficulty communicating with tribal societies and resolving conflict with them peacefully.

Communications within cultures, or between similar cultures produced by one civilization, have always been much easier than communications across cultures produced by different civilizations.

Latin Americans, for example, have less difficulty communicating with each other than with North Americans, while the latter have an easier time communicating with Europeans than with Asians. Third World nations in general, whose cultures are products of a largely agricultural civilization, find it easier to communicate with and understand each other than to communicate with and understand either the Europeans or the Americans whose culture are products of an industrial civilization. Communicating across cultures, therefore, must be understood and defined as communicating across civilizational lines.

Until the fifteenth century, no center of civilization had experienced profound change to distinguish itself from other centers. As Paul Kennedy said, "each of the great centers of world civilization about that time was at a roughly similar stage of development."<sup>33</sup> Because of that fact, "the world formed a single, albeit large, social system that operated at a much slower pace than that to which we have become accustomed."<sup>34</sup>

But around the middle of the fifteenth century, change in the states and ways of living of certain societies began to accelerate. Several developments forced all systems in those societies to enter a new stage of transformation. Trade, which by then had become an important economic activity, led the ensuing change and paved the way for the socioeconomic transformations that were to follow. Other developments occurred subsequently and were instrumental in promoting change and helping accelerate its pace. Such developments included the following: substantial improvements in navigation tools and maps, the building of better roads and ships, the production of more potent arms, enhanced security, growing competition between the major European cities and states, the development of printing, and the European discovery of what was to them a new world. Subsequently, manufacturing expanded, services, especially financial services, were established and acknowledged as an important and legitimate business activity, and scientific, technological and philosophical inquiry multiplied.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution took place in England, and from there it traveled to other European and North American countries, transforming the old agricultural life in ways and to extents previously unknown. "Agricultural societies were transformed into urban industrial societies within the space of perhaps a hundred years, and all the accumulated norms, social habits and customs that had characterized rural or village life were replaced by the rhythms of the factory and the city."<sup>35</sup>

### **The Industrial Age**

The emergence and spread of a new way of organizing manufacturing was the spark that started the Industrial Revolution. Workers were brought to work together in one place for one master, who often was the sole owner of the means of production and the goods to be produced. Workers, who worked for the new entrepreneur, were often landless and powerless people having nothing more than their labor to sell. Because of that powerlessness, they were, especially during the first century of the industrial age, vulnerable; they were subject to exploitation and denigration by the industrial capitalist.

The Industrial Revolution, just like the agricultural revolution of some 10,000 years earlier, ushered in a new wave of change that transformed all aspects of community life in every industrial state. For example, workers were no longer free to determine their own hours of work and how to perform their work. Tasks were assigned, working hours were specified, regulations were developed and imposed, and hierarchical relationships within the workplace were established and enforced. Income was tied to work, and survival as well as material well-being became a function of work availability and worker capacity to work long hours and endure the pain of performing repetitious, boring functions. For the first time in history, the new industrial workers could own neither the place of their work, nor the means of production, nor the end products. Their only source of income was their labor, and their labor was the only commodity they could trade.

Workers were forced by the circumstances to work in large numbers, in one place, and for long hours. They also had to live near their places of work in clustered residential communities lacking almost all amenities. Slums, consequently, emerged and became home for a large and growing rootless, powerless, and very vulnerable social class, whose appearance was seen by many as inevitable. Critics of this development, however, saw it as an evil act committed intentionally by the new heartless capitalist class. Critics, as a result, called for change but failed to agree on its direction. Disagreement regarding the desired direction of change led critics to be divided along two major lines—one revolutionary, the other utopian. But despite several attempts to make revolutions and build utopias, history has rendered both utopia and revolution impractical and unworkable in the long run.

The workers who were most attracted by the new job opportunities were the young whose families had earlier lived an agricultural life on land that was taken away from them. Being landless in a new environment made them also rootless; they had to develop new traditions and plant new roots suited to their unique, unprecedented circumstances. Karl Marx, writing in 1848, some 80 years after the Industrial Revolution, observed that “man’s ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations, and in his social life, or in the state of his living.”<sup>36</sup>

While people were being uprooted and compelled to work and live under appalling conditions, members of the capitalist class were living in affluence and accumulating more wealth, which enabled them to continually improve the quality of their own lives, gather more prestige and power, and exploit more people as domestic servants and industrial workers. More than a century later, the number of servants working and living in the home of the rich individual was used as a criterion to determine the social class to which the owner of the home belonged. “Census categories of the time defined a lower middle class household as one that employed fewer than three servants.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite the fact that farmers and servants who worked on farms and in their masters' houses were at the time the two largest groups in almost every European country, neither group was recognized as a social class. Members of each group were weak and scattered and, despite sharing similar living and working conditions, were unable to develop a consciousness of their own. But with the emergence of the landless, rootless industrial workers who lived in slums, things began to change and gradually a new, active social class emerged.

The new class soon began to seek change, asking both the capitalists and the state to improve working and living conditions. They formed labor unions and community organizations to facilitate collective bargaining and apply collective political pressure. Union members, nevertheless, were unable to achieve their goals without resorting to demonstrations, strikes and, at times, violence. Intellectuals, seeing the enormity of exploitation, especially of children, and the inhumane life and working conditions of workers, supported the demands of the new social class. Gradually, the industrial workers were able to develop a consciousness of their own and become more assertive, forcing the state to recognize their grievances and address their legitimate concerns.

Official recognition of labor unions and their right to strike and bargain collectively on the one hand, and intellectual support of these rights on the other, served, in turn, to strengthen democracy and political association in society. And while democracy was being strengthened and labor unions were growing stronger and better organized, life conditions in general were improving for all members of the industrial society. Several factors had contributed to making this development a reality:

1. Continued development of new technologies, which improved productivity and reduced costs of production.
2. Increased demand for manufactured goods, which enabled the capitalist to make more profit and provide better wages and employment opportunities.
3. Increased state income from taxes, which led governments to spend more on health, education, infrastructure and other welfare projects.

4. Official recognition of the need to limit monopoly and end exploitation, particularly of children, which led gradually to the diversification and expansion of business opportunities, and thus facilitated the eventual emergence of a viable middle class.

While the economic and living conditions of the industrial worker were steadily improving, migration from the countryside to urban areas was gradually transforming community life and destroying the socioeconomic bases of the extended family. The new communities that emerged in the industrial cities were composed of families sharing smaller living spaces and facing similar life challenges. Traditions and kinship norms, which had served as the social glue that held the old agricultural community together for countless generations while minimizing change, were no longer available or workable in the industrial environment. In addition, most life experiences and traditions could not be passed on from grandparents to grandchildren because life conditions were changing so quickly that the knowledge and wisdom of the past were fast becoming outdated and irrelevant. Neither tribes nor clans, therefore, could continue to function and be viable in the new industrial society.

For example, the old family home on the farm lost much of its economic and social role in the new industrial society; it could no longer perform many of its traditional tasks. The education of children, the making of clothes, the processing of agricultural products, and even entertainment moved almost entirely out of the home to new institutions run by specialists. Caring for the sick and the elderly also moved gradually to hospitals and special health care facilities, further weakening family obligations and ties.

Changes in both the economic and political structures led to changing the social structure and the way of living in all industrial societies, producing a new civilization—the industrial civilization. Because these transformations were, and to a great extent still are, limited to Western societies, the new pattern of life and its culture were dubbed the Western civilization. Sometimes the term culture is used to differentiate between certain Western societies, such as the French and

German, the British and Italian, or the European in general and the American. Industrial civilization, like the agricultural civilization that preceded it, produced its own cultural varieties wherever it took roots.

Socio-political historians and philosophers of history, despite a wealth of books and ideas, have not been able to agree on the nature and relative role of the forces that caused the Industrial Revolution. Some believe that economics and self-interest were the determining factors that led the transformation process. Others argue that the Protestant Reformation, which brought about many bloody religious wars in Europe and led to the separation of religion and state, was the decisive factor. Still others feel that the enclosure movement, which ended the feudal system as lords repossessed the land on which farmers had lived and worked for generations, created the first landless, rootless social class that provided the cheap, exploitable labor whose sweat facilitated the building of the industrial capitalist system. Science, technology, new ideas, inventions, population growth, urbanization, political freedom, and economic liberty are also cited as forces whose contributions to the Industrial Revolution were momentous.

Karl Marx was one of the first philosophers to argue that the underlying economic forces in society are responsible for cultural products such as religion and ideology. Max Weber, on the other hand, argued that culture produces certain forms of economic behavior.<sup>38</sup> Both arguments, while basically correct, are partial and therefore cannot individually provide a satisfactory explanation of how societies respond to changes in either the economic conditions or the cultural values that prevail in their societies. In a civilizational setting, culture, with its religious core and political organization, plays the crucial role in changing economic behavior and determining social attitudes. But in transitional periods, it is the economic forces and technological innovations that lead the way to change.

The three centuries prior to the Industrial Revolution were decisive years in which new forces of change were born and older ones were either eliminated or reactivated. These three centuries of accelerated change represented a transitional period during which many of the

old systems and institutions were undermined, new ones were established, and qualitative change was effected. The Industrial Revolution was the culmination of countless changes, many of which were technological and scientific in nature, and some of which were manifestations of economic change and social and political conflict.

The new age of industry did not only expand manufacturing; it also helped agriculture expand, diversify, and become much more productive. Agriculture, consequently, became dependent on industry; it could not increase productivity and improve the quality of its products as fast as needed without the machines, fertilizers, irrigation systems, roads, and improved seeds that industry and its scientific and technological base had produced. Without the agricultural development that followed industrialization, food production would have been less than adequate to support a growing industrial working class and feed servants and other urban dwellers. Rendering agriculture dependent on industry has also caused agricultural society and its civilization to become dependent on the industrial civilization and its society. The natural dependency of the agricultural society on the industrial one thus renders the *dependency theory* articulated by Latin American intellectuals to explain Third World lack of development largely meaningless.

There is no doubt that the Western capitalist nations and their colonialist enterprise have worked hard to deepen the dependency of Third World economies on their own industrial ones and, because of that, colonialism did contribute to hindering the transformation of Third World economies in general. Nevertheless, there was nothing that the agricultural societies could do to avoid dependency; dependency was and still is a natural historical development that no agricultural society could in the past or can now escape. In fact, there are societies such as Saudi Arabia that were not subjected to colonialism but still failed to enter the industrial age, while others that were subjected to colonialism, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, that were able to join the community of the industrialized nations. Therefore, the dependency theory described by some as Latin America's most successful export, is not a model capable of explaining the lack of genuine development in

the Third World; it is rather a sophisticated argument to blame the other and justify failure.<sup>39</sup>

The triumph of Christian nationalism in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, which led to the persecution and expulsion of Arabs and Jews from Spain, marked the end of the great contributions of the civilizations or empires of the past. For some 500 consecutive years since then, neither Arabs, Chinese, Indians, Mexicans, nor Persians have been able to make notable contributions to the industrial civilization in any field of human endeavor. Agricultural society in general can neither challenge industrial society nor undermine its cultural, economic, political or military dominance. Furthermore, no agricultural society can defend itself against the ideas, economies, or armies of the industrial society. Because of industrial superiority, tiny England was able in less than 150 years to rule more than half of the world's population.

The fundamental change in the way of human living ushered in by the Industrial Revolution made the history and wisdom of the previous era largely irrelevant to the new one. Meanwhile, agricultural society in general, feeling threatened and pressured by the industrial one, became more protective of its old, traditional way of life. As a result, most African, Asian, and Latin American agricultural societies began to retrench, becoming more conservative and reactionary both in thought and in policy. This development served to further weaken the ability of the agricultural society to initiate change and transform its way of life. And due to mounting outside pressure and an expansionist industrial strategy, the agricultural societies in general found themselves functioning within smaller and more protective space.

The advancement of the industrial age expanded the scope and activities of the economic process, which in turn gave both the capitalist and capital prominent roles to play in society. Slowly but steadily, the economic process was allowed to assume a leading role in all industrial societies, greatly influencing social structures, cultures, and politics. The capacity of this process to contribute to every human activity enabled it to grow in strength and visibility; it challenged and eventually replaced the political process as the dominant societal process.

The decisive role played by industrial technology, money and energy in winning World War II in the 1940s was also instrumental in giving the economic process the upper hand in society.

Changing the state of human living as described above caused the history and the historical logic of the old era, the agricultural era, to come to an end; it no longer had valid experiences to share, or proven wisdom to give. The new society had to write its own history and depict its own logic while its social, political and economic relationships were being rearranged. Nations that failed to understand this historical lesson, such as the Russian, Arab, Persian, Chinese, and Indian nations, have been dwarfed by history and made to pay a heavy price in squandered resources, lost opportunities, and increased dependency on others.

A few decades after the economic process became the most influential force of change, concerns began to be expressed regarding the damage it was causing to the environment and to the poor. Questions began to be raised as to the ability of the environment to sustain the then-prevailing production and consumption levels and to make life livable for future generations. Pollution control, sustainable development, helping the poor, and reducing military spending consequently became popular issues among intellectuals, scientists and liberal politicians everywhere.

Meanwhile, a communications revolution and an information revolution were occurring and changing reality. These two revolutions are linked and interdependent; they form one powerful societal process, the *infomedia process*. Before those two revolutions occurred, the media was more of a social tool best suited for serving the interests of the elite. The twin revolutions, however, revolutionized the media and its role in society; they transformed it into a powerful societal process with the capacity to dominate and manipulate the socio-cultural, political and economic processes and accelerate the pace of social change at both the national and global levels. "The physical and mental world we inhabit has changed more—and faster and more often—in the past 200 years than it did in the previous 20,000 years."<sup>40</sup>

## The Age of Knowledge

The age of agriculture lasted about 10,000 years before the Industrial Revolution took place. Because of its long duration, it was able to transform the states of living and ways of living of most tribal societies. When the age of industry arrived in the second half of the eighteenth century, more than 80 percent of the world's population was already living in the agricultural age. But when the age of knowledge announced its impending arrival in the late 1980s, the age of industry was hardly 200 years old, with more than two-thirds of the world's population still living in the agricultural and pre-agricultural ages. Due to the nature of the new age and its complexity and unique knowledge requirements, it is not expected to transform the entire state of living and way of living of an entire society of any state.

The 1980s, which witnessed the advancement of the twin revolutions of communications and information, marked the beginning of a new transitional period in human history. This transitional period is paving the way today for the development of the age of knowledge. In this age, the infomedia process is expected to become the leading societal process of change and transformation.

At the time of the writing of this book, we seem to be approaching the middle of the transitional period leading to the age of knowledge. Because of that, it may be unwise to attempt to describe the major characteristics of the newly emergent era in concrete terms, particularly since it is expected to be an era of continuous change and transformation. "The change we have seen in the last 100 years, as significant as it's been, will pale in comparison to the change we will see in the next 20 years, because we are now in a transitional era...We are moving out of the industrial age, and into something new called the information age."<sup>41</sup>

However, many far-reaching changes have already occurred and can be detected at all levels of the state of human living and its socio-political and economic organization. Values, traditions, needs, and convictions that used to provide the glue that kept communities and families together have already been weakened; some of them have

already become dysfunctional. Basic assumptions that helped economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians conceptualize, define, and analyze nations and social and political units such as community, society, the nation-state, and family have been either partially or totally invalidated.

National cultures, for example, are being divided into subcultures along ethnic, national, racial, religious and socioeconomic lines. Shared traditions and values, convictions, languages, and collective historical experiences are no longer enough to maintain the unity and viability of any traditional culture or society, particularly in the long run. Interests, lifestyles, hobbies, professions, and educational backgrounds are becoming more important in forming new communities and dividing older ones. And because the so-called virtual communities can and do transcend political borders and other socio-cultural backgrounds, they are helping produce a unique global culture with its own core of values. National societies, moreover, are being divided into subsocieties along socio-cultural lines. More on these issues and how they affect the new age and are affected by it is discussed in the following chapter.

Reactions to developments instigated by the advancement of the age of knowledge are deep everywhere. People seem to have become overwhelmed by strange currents of change, and there is a feeling of general loss of control and direction. The resulting reactions range from denial to bewilderment, from political conservatism and religious fundamentalism to radical nationalism and extremism, from universalism and globalism to tribalism and ethno-nationalism. Such reactions are found with varying degrees within all societies today, within the rich as well as the poor, the developed as well as the underdeveloped. All of these reactions cause conflict and instigate change and, in the process, make history more dynamic and irreversible.

In concluding this chapter, I wish to reiterate that each *stage* of human development represents a unique civilization that comes after a difficult and sometimes long transitional period. Such periods, viewed from a wide angle, represent discontinuities in the historical process. They are battlegrounds for a war between the old values and

the new ones, between the forces of stability and continuity and those of innovation and change. Transitional periods tend to be workshops for destructive creativity, where creativity is a tool of destruction and destruction is a condition for creativity. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, almost all the nations and cultures of the world seem to be, as Matthew Arnold once remarked, "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other unable to be born."<sup>42</sup>

In the non-distant past, gifted individuals, political leaders, creative ideas, certain cultures and states, natural resources, and the environment played important, at times decisive, roles as agents of change. Lately, however, the roles of all such agents have been greatly and irreversibly reduced, and the roles of certain societal processes have been vastly enhanced at their expense. The most important of such processes are the socio-cultural process, the political process, the economic process, and the infomedia process. While the first three processes are old, the last one is new; its societal role is yet to be clearly defined and fully appreciated. The historical development of these societal processes and how they relate to each other and interact with one another will be explored in Chapter Four.

Each civilization has produced its own larger culture, causing societies living in that civilization to have similar cultures or varied shades of the larger one. In addition, each civilization or stage of human development was largely dominated by one societal process. Although that particular process did not cancel out the other processes, it dominated them, reducing their influence and making social transformation largely a function of its own dynamics.

As each new civilization got established, the preceding one and the societies living in it could not successfully challenge the new one or its societies and, consequently, the former became dependent on the latter and less able to transform themselves and make real progress on their own. They had to acknowledge the superiority of the new civilization, imitate it and accept dependency on it, or retreat into their own civilizational shell and deteriorate slowly into irrelevance. The history of each stage, as a result, had to end with the transitional period, which

marks the end of one history and the beginning of another, each of which has its own logic and dynamics and is relevant only to its own societies and times. The change in the relative role of each societal process as history moves from one civilization to another makes history unable to repeat itself. Therefore, past history can neither shape the future nor predict its course.

Throughout history, conflict and change have maintained a mutually reinforcing relationship, causing people and the institutions through which they function to experience both without interruption. At times, change precipitated conflict; at others, conflict paved the way for change. Because of this mutuality, the extent of each has largely become a function of the other, and often a consequence of how the other is managed. People, no matter how hard they may try, can avoid neither conflict nor change, nor can they escape the impact of either one on their personal lives and collective consciousness. The interaction of conflict and change in society, and the accumulation of their consequences, are the forces that shape and reshape the collective memories of nations and irreversibly change the character of their national cultures.

Change is usually caused by the introduction of new ideas that have socio-political implications, or in response to technological innovations that have organizational, entrepreneurial and economic applications. Change may occur first at the intellectual level, creating a new state of mind, which in turn labors, often hard, to change the actual states of socio-political and economic affairs. Change may also start by the introduction of new technology in the economic arena and work slowly to change the prevailing state of mind. This change in particular starts usually as an integral part of the existing order and due to its internal dynamics, not as a challenge to it, and emerges as a natural byproduct of human efforts to develop and transform life conditions.

The change that technological developments precipitate does not tend to be revolutionary or sudden or to clash with the basic interests of the prevailing socio-political order despite its long-term implications. Gradual adjustment, rather than open conflict, is usually the path

through which technological change travels into the larger society to effect behavioral, institutional and societal change. New states of political and economic affairs are ultimately created, causing new social gaps to develop and persist in society that instigate conflict and cause further change.

In contrast, change that starts with the state of mind, such as Protestantism and Communism, usually presents a challenge to the existing socio-political order, forcing it to react, sometimes violently, to defend itself. Change precipitated by a changed state of mind is more likely to be revolutionary than evolutionary, causing open conflict and probably violence before effecting the desired change in the existing states of the socio-political and economic affairs. Change may still occur at both levels without lag, leading to transforming the prevailing state of mind and reforming socio-political and economic affairs simultaneously, without much conflict. Japan was such a case.

The emerging age of knowledge is creating a new society that seems destined to live in a state of perpetual change. At the same time, the infomedia process, which has emerged to lead societal change in general, combines elements of all three of the other processes and therefore is helping them to become more active. It is the first time in history that the socio-cultural, political, and economic processes find an environment suited for their activation at once. This is a new development that makes history not only unable to repeat itself but also unable to move through transitional periods along the civilizational ladder in an orderly manner. The historical process, therefore, has lost its historical innocence, opening the way for profoundly genuine social transformations and unprecedented opportunities for change.

## Chapter Three

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### Social Transformation

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Human societies, since their formation, have been experiencing change and social transformation without interruption. At times, the pace of social change was fairly fast and noticeable; at others it was so slow as to be unnoticeable. For most of human history, the pace of change was very slow, and no noticeable transformations in life conditions could be seen or felt for several generations. However, “once tools were regularly made and used, they became a factor in human evolution, setting limits to behavior and opening new possibilities in both the organic and behavioral spheres.”<sup>43</sup> Tools and other technological devices have made social change, especially economic change, not only possible, but also inevitable.

Conflict and change instigated by either ideas or technologies or both, have continued to shape and reshape human life and people’s cultures; as a result, the world has increased in complexity over time. Since ideas do not die easily even after being superseded and invalidated, they continue to provoke debate and cause uncertainties. And because technologies and the knowledge gained from and by them cannot be undone, the histories of both ideas and technological knowledge have become cumulative. And this in turn has caused change to become cumulative and the course of human history irreversible. “History, the

truly relevant source of change, will not be reversed," wrote John Kenneth Galbraith.<sup>44</sup>

Social transformation consists of change in relationships, in attitudes, in values and in social and economic structures; it represents a qualitative and quantitative change in the human economic and social conditions. Through time, societies have been transformed from small associations of individuals or hunters and gatherers tied together by instincts and customs, to small communities tied together by need, circumstances, kinship, traditions, and belief systems, to complex organizations and nations tied together by interests, ideologies and cultures.

Social transformation, being a force of change that changes people's values and socioeconomic relationships, is a source of conflict. Depending on the extent of change it instigates, the conflict can be mild, expressed largely in the form of intellectual dissent and spiritual revival, or severe, expressed in the form of political upheaval or civil war. Since each conflict has its own roots, no conflict can be resolved without the introduction of some change that takes into consideration the causes of the conflict and changes the old balance of relationships.

In earlier times, man lacked the ability to control his physical environment, or even to modify its behavior in a meaningful way. Because of that inability, the environment was able to impose its will on human life, causing life conditions to stay static for generations. Meanwhile, the tools that societies developed at the time to deal with their environments were very primitive, and not in common use. As a result, tribal life remained the same for thousands of years; only war and mutual victimization were common reoccurrences.

During the age of agriculture, change was caused by internal as well as by external forces, with the latter being more effective. Internal forces representing changed environmental settings and new ideas led to the modification of attitudes and the development of new values, relationships, and habits. External forces representing political and military conquest forced cultural interaction among societies and instigated technological borrowing and the expansion of trade. Yet meaningful transformations were not possible because neither the internal nor the

external forces of change were capable of conceiving such a change, let alone forcing it on societies whose cultures were based on traditions and rigid belief systems. In addition, all cultures of the agricultural age were similar to each other, making whatever borrowing took place between societies and its impact on their lives relatively insignificant.

During the age of industry, which came after the defeat of traditional value and belief systems, social change became a consequence of internal as well as external forces, with the first being more effective. The internal forces of change have been responsible for causing unprecedented social transformations in every industrial society. Economic wealth, advanced technologies, science, political freedom, and military power enabled each industrialized society to distinguish itself and lead other societies in one respect or another.

In the post-industrial age, social change in societies living the age is rapidly becoming a function of internal forces alone. They are forces rooted in the information and communications fields that seem unable to stop changing, making social transformation a very dynamic and uncontrollable process. Such fields tend to be managed and often owned by a knowledge elite in each society, whose interests and capabilities stretch beyond all borders. And because such elites are linked together across national borders by sophisticated communications networks and shared professional and economic interests, they are gradually forming a unified global elite.

In the wake of the end of the Cold War, members of this emerging elite began to free themselves from ideological ties and national commitments. And because they are linked together constantly, and are able to exchange information instantly, they will share many economic and non-economic interests permanently. Since the realm of their activities covers the entire world, they are also able to cooperate more and compete less to keep conflict manageable and change sustainable.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, life conditions have reached a dynamic state, and technologies to enhance our ability to deal with every aspect of life are being developed at the speed of light. Countless people, institutions, and organizations with varied and,

oftentimes, contradictory interests are participating today in this development process. A “world in transition” seems to have emerged, where impersonal, non-institutional, non-ideological forces are assuming the leadership role in instigating change and producing social transformations of immense proportions and implications. It is estimated that the last 30 years of the twentieth century have witnessed “tenfold increases in communication by electronic means and tenfold reduction in person-to-person contact.”<sup>45</sup>

A world in transition describes a societal life in which no stable situations exist. Change in such societies goes in all directions, works at all levels, and affects all people and all relationships and institutions, at the very same time. In addition, such change tends to produce a large number of winners and many losers with different socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic roots, as well as contradictory interests. Because of this complexity and dynamism, no one particular trend of change can be defined with clarity and accepted as fully desirable or totally undesirable.

Technologies covering all areas of production, services, and modes of organization are working throughout the four societal processes whose actions and reactions are the major forces that instigate change, cause conflict, and produce social transformations. Great ideas, deep convictions and grand designs have lost their power to initiate real change and cause transformations. They are being reduced to mere policies, laws and regulations to manage change and make it more desirable and predictable.

Ideas, convictions, and beliefs on the one hand, and technologies, institutions, and systems on the other have had a competitive relationship in societal life throughout history. Wherever beliefs, traditions and ideological convictions dominate, technologies are constrained and used primarily as tools to enhance the power of ideology and its leadership, not to enrich the lives of people. Iran, Serbia and Sudan present good examples where technology and the economy have been used to enhance the power of ideology and ideological leadership at the expense of the people. And wherever technologies, institutions,

and social systems dominate, ideologies have become obstacles to change, able only to react negatively to situations rather than to shape destinies. Thus, the undermining of the power and influence of ideological convictions in society, particularly rigid religious beliefs and traditional value systems, has become a precondition for technological progress and social transformation.

Throughout history, able, often charismatic leaders have symbolized the ideas and convictions that left a lasting impact on the lives of people. At the same time, no leader could claim greatness and be recognized as great without being associated with great ideological ideas and unconventional convictions. Perhaps not surprisingly, the recent decline in the role of ideas and convictions, or ideology in general, has thus been associated with a decline in the role and status of leaders. The future, therefore, is unlikely to witness the appearance of a great leader or a grand ideology that can change the course of history in a meaningful way.

Political leaders, who might come and claim greatness in the future, are more likely to emerge in developing, multiethnic, and largely pre-industrial societies. Yet no nation has been able to achieve freedom and institute democracy and respect for human rights under the rule of charismatic leaders claiming greatness or divine authority. Charisma in society has always been in conflict with institutional bureaucracy because the latter works normally to enforce the law that seeks to undermine the power of charisma and limit its freedom of action. In societies that still live in pre-industrial times, the socio-cultural and political processes still dominate, hindering the development of efficient institutional bureaucracy and giving political leaders the opportunity to be absolutists. Absolute rulers, particularly the charismatic ones such as Saddam Hussein, are "always finding themselves obeyed and almost adored with such reverence and praise. They are subject to such boundless self-esteem that they take no advice from others,"<sup>46</sup> and have therefore no respect for the rights of anyone. In post-industrial society, in contrast, political power has become

fragmented and weak, causing charismatic leadership to have neither a place nor a big role to play.

In this world of transition, we are forced to shape our fate as individuals, groups, organizations, and socio-cultural communities through the workings of the four processes of change and transformation. They are the only forces that initiate change, cause conflict, balance and rebalance relationships, and effect social transformation. The order they have created and seem intent on perpetuating is one that borders on disorder and even chaos. But chaos and the uncertainty created by it signify the triumph of freedom over sacred order, of choice over fate, of ordinary people over ordained leaders and saints. Moreover, change caused and managed by the four societal processes is not necessarily desirable, at least by everyone, and often fails to meet accepted standards of morality and equity. Consequently, understanding the societal role of each process and its actions, reactions, and interactions with the other processes has become one of the most difficult, yet most indispensable, tasks.

### **Social Transformation in Earlier Times**

During the age of hunting and gathering, a nomadic tribal society emerged and endured for tens of thousands of years without noticeable change. Members of that society organized themselves around customs and were tied to each other by blood and kinship relationships. While social customs had the force of law, myth and magic played the role of science and technology. Since traditions and customs are forces of stability and continuity, and myths and magic are ideas and acts of deception, neither force could instigate real change or even influence life conditions in a meaningful way. Therefore, no genuine social transformation was possible. History, as a result, was forced to move in place rather than in time.

Animal husbandry and plant cultivation were the most important technologies developed by man about 10,000 years ago; they enabled human societies to experience profound social transformations and

move up the civilizational ladder. A transition from the tribal to the agricultural civilization represented a true revolution in the totality of the human condition, causing, as it unfolded, tension, anxiety and fear. "Every great change in human history has come at a high price, and the greater the change, usually the higher the price."<sup>47</sup> While most tribal societies made the changeover from hunting and gathering to agriculture, others resisted, preferring the older way of life. Those that resisted change preferred to endure relative poverty and even famine for the sake of a nomadic life that provided them with more freedom.

Religion as we know it appeared thousands of years after the dawn of the agricultural age, and developed over time into an institution with authority. At times, religion associated itself with the state; at others, it controlled the state. Often, it competed with the state for influence and for people's allegiance and obedience. People in earlier times lived in smaller, isolated communities, and had such a strong belief in faith and fate that they accepted their lot in life, obeyed authority, and refrained from questioning their leaders. In such societies, honesty was common and trust was both personal and genuine.

Life under traditional agriculture is usually timeless and serene, enabling belief in faith and fate to prevail and to perpetuate the forces of stability and continuity. Such life reflects acceptance and tranquility, which, in turn, breed stagnation and limit imagination and curiosity. In fact, agricultural societies in general prefer feeling to knowing; people want to feel good, be secure and feel comfortable. They seem to lack the desire to know more than needed to run their daily lives, and thus little or no interest in knowing what disturbs those lives, particularly the inner lives of contentment. Because of such contentment, it took about ten thousand years, numerous scientific discoveries and technological developments, and countless ideas and wars before life under agriculture began to experience systematic and systemic change and witness the introduction of genuine social transformation.

Nietzsche argued that humankind would not be able to develop its potential in the presence of God, because a belief in fate restrains one's ability to grow and dampens one's ambition. One can argue further

that human societies cannot exploit or even discover their potential under authoritarian rule, be it military or theocratic, because the command system it imposes and the obedience it demands tend to suffocate freedom and vastly limit individual initiative and human imagination.

Before the end of the fourteenth century, commerce began to challenge both traditions and traditional authority in Italy and, later, in other Southern European countries. The expansion of trade caused economic and financial activities to increase, cities and city-states to grow and prosper, and a new social class of merchants to emerge. Members of this class were city dwellers, some of whom were freed from the feudal system that had previously exploited and enslaved them. Because of their experience with slavery, most city dwellers felt and acted as free people. If democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people, the city-states in Southern Europe were "government of the merchants by the merchants for the merchants."<sup>48</sup> However, the conservative teachings of the Church and its economic doctrine made it difficult for cities and their urban populations to function freely and pursue their self-interests without interference. Consequently, conflict could neither be avoided nor managed without the introduction and subsequent acceptance of fundamental change in religious teachings and political organization.

Between 1500 and 1650, Europe was a battleground dominated by religious and political wars from which the royal dynasties and the nation-state emerged as winners and warriors. The winners subsequently developed their technology and military power and used it to wage new wars to expand the territories they controlled both within and outside of Europe. "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence."<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, a mercantilist economic philosophy appeared, dictating that the state make new laws and regulations to protect national industries, support manufacturing, and exploit the markets and resources of other, less fortunate nations. It was this philosophy that

provided the engine of colonialism and caused the activation of the economic process, enabling it later to share power with the political process. Although the establishment of financial institutions and the formation of large trading houses were instrumental in strengthening the economic process, "the manufacture of cloth was the chief industry of the age of agriculture, and in the end innovations in it indeed led to the transformation of the world."<sup>50</sup>

The expansion of trade and the growing number of city dwellers were aspects and agents of change; they made the fifteenth century the beginning of the transitional period from the age of agriculture to the age of industry. During this period, change was moving at a relatively slow pace, without a clear or sustained direction. But in the wake of the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century, the pace of change began to accelerate, and political economists and social philosophers began to develop theories and hypotheses to describe it, explain it, and manage its consequences.

### **Social Transformation in the Age of Industry**

As the age of industry advanced, power in society began to lose its connection to the aristocracy, who derived their power from land ownership. A new class of business entrepreneurs, particularly those involved in manufacturing, finance, and trade, began to replace the old aristocracy, controlling power and using it to maximize their material gains and enhance their social status. In the process, deeper social transformations occurred, fundamentally changing the class structure and the way of life in all of the industrial societies.

The economic process driven by self-interest and protected by a liberal political atmosphere was instrumental in making people more aware of the importance of technology and the rewards of hard work. People, as a result, began to change the way they organized their social and economic lives in order to manage the production of goods more efficiently and maximize their gains. But due to the conservative nature of the socio-cultural process and its religious core, the change

that characterized the economic aspects of life moved faster than that which characterized the socio-cultural aspects of it. In fact, throughout history, change in the socio-cultural arena has almost always come in response to changes in the economic and technological arenas and lagged behind it. At times the response has been rather quick and positive, but at most other times, it has been negative or reluctant and slow.

Change in attitudes regarding values and convictions, though important to economic development and scientific progress, has always been difficult to effect. In addition, the benefits of economics and technology come about rather quickly, while the benefits of socio-cultural change are realized much later; only the negative aspects of socio-cultural change are evident initially, and they tend to disrupt relationships and spread apprehension. Consequently, the change that followed the Industrial Revolution caused societies to be divided between rich and poor; it also deepened the socio-cultural gaps separating the liberals from the conservatives, and the urban from the rural dwellers. Wherever the pace of economic change is fast, social divisions within societies are likely to become multi-dimensional, causing the socio-cultural gaps to deepen and make communications among people more difficult, alienation a fact of life, and social conflict more common.

One of the manifestations of the social change that followed the Industrial Revolution has been the transformation of agriculture and the way of life of farmers in general. Around the end of the nineteenth century, farmers constituted more than 50 percent of the labor force in the West. A century later, farmers comprised less than 5 percent of the labor force in the West in general, but less than 3 percent in the United States. Meanwhile, agriculture itself has been transformed from a way of life and into an industry, dependent on technology, food processing, credit financing, and modern distribution systems; it evolved into an agribusiness that is capital-intensive.

The dramatic shift from agriculture to industry was originally perceived as a threat to food security. But as people were leaving

agriculture and abandoning their farms and villages, agricultural machinery, chemical fertilizers and new, more efficient systems of irrigation were revolutionizing agriculture, raising productivity and improving the quality of agricultural products in general. Meanwhile, population growth rates in the industrialized societies were declining, causing demand for agricultural products to rise only slightly and slowly. In contrast, the underdeveloped agricultural societies continued to depend on traditional methods of farming and primitive tools of production at a time when improved health care was causing the rate of population growth in their societies to rise. Consequently, agricultural productivity could not keep pace with population increases, and almost every underdeveloped nation ultimately became a net food importer. The nations of the Third World in general have thus become increasingly dependent on the industrial ones, not only for imports of manufactured goods, but also for food products, technology and capital.

As the farm population was declining in the West, another large group, home servants, was slowly disappearing. Around the year 1900, the second largest group in the population and in the work force of every industrializing country was the on-site servants who worked and lived on the estates of their masters. "Census categories of the time defined a 'lower middle class' household as one that employed fewer than three servants."<sup>51</sup> About 60 years later, this group of people had almost disappeared, as a new way of life had replaced the old one, leaving very little room for live-in servants. New, more efficient houses, household appliances, schools catering to the needs of children, hospitals and nursing homes, and a new lifestyle accustomed to eating outside the family home led to reducing the need for the services of live-in servants tremendously.

Blue-collar workers constituted about 5 percent of the labor force around the end of the nineteenth century. But as manufacturing expanded, the size of this class grew rather quickly, and people's awareness of its status and needs increased and persisted. The seemingly unlimited pool of workers leaving farming and domestic services to become industrial workers was instrumental in expanding

manufacturing and the size of the working class. The labor pool also enabled the emerging capitalist class to expand production, exploit the struggling industrial workers, make large profits, and, in the process, accumulate huge wealth. "The new class, industrial workers, was extremely visible. This is what made these workers a class. They lived perforce in dense population clusters and in cities."<sup>52</sup>

Due to the appalling conditions under which members of this class worked and lived, the industrial working class became the focal point of the philosophical works of Karl Marx and other socialist thinkers, who devoted much of their research and writing to analyzing its historical origins, its life conditions and its role in society. As compared to the much larger groups of farmers and servants, the industrial class commanded unprecedented public attention and socio-political importance. Marx predicted that the working class would revolt against its masters, and that it would eventually take power and ownership of the means of production.

Nevertheless, "for farmers and domestic servants, industrial work was an opportunity. It was, in fact, the first opportunity that social history has given them to better themselves substantially without having to emigrate."<sup>53</sup> Eventually, the increased size and power of organized labor, public sympathy, intellectual support, and increased business profits enabled labor to obtain higher wages and salaries and to attain substantially improved working and living conditions.

Yet just when it seemed that this social class was on its way to gaining societal control, its fortunes began to decline rapidly. The industrial economy began in the 1960s to shift its activities from manufacturing to services, some of which were knowledge-based, requiring specialized training and skills that the industrial working class did not have and could hardly afford. Since the 1960s, a new economy has gradually emerged, creating new jobs that require more schooling, special technological training, and changed attitudes. Such jobs have proven to be more of a challenge to the typical industrial worker than an opportunity. Other jobs that the new economy has been producing in the service sector are low paying jobs requiring little or no skills and knowledge,

making them of little or no interest to the industrial worker. Consequently, the size, power, and social status of the industrial working class began to diminish gradually, even as it continued to organize strikes and win at the bargaining table.

The size of the American industrial class grew from a low of 5 percent of the labor force in 1900 to about 40 percent in 1950. It began thereafter to decline, reaching 25 percent in 1970 and about 15 percent by the end of the twentieth century. Four major factors have contributed to the decline in the size of this class:

1. The rising productivity of labor, automated methods of production, and improved management of inventories of manufactured products have caused production to increase without needing more labor.
2. The emergence of a new group of industrializing and trading nations, particularly in Asia, where labor is cheap, environmental regulations less restrictive, and taxes lower, causing American imports to increase and domestic demand for industrial labor to decline.
3. The tendency of multinational corporations to maximize profits by expanding activities abroad and relocating operations where labor costs are lower.
4. The increased demand for skilled and unskilled labor in the expanding service sector, particularly in healthcare, finance and banking, legal and consulting, marketing, education, the media and publishing, and information.

The new economy, which began to emerge in the late 1980s in the industrialized societies, is knowledge-based and service-oriented. Because the role of knowledge in life in general is on the rise, and since the association of wealth and power with knowledge is being strengthened, it seems that any possibility of the industrial working class ever recapturing its glory has vanished. It is rather difficult to imagine that the industrial working class will ever be large enough and confident and independent enough to have the required political clout to cause societal change in its favor. Whoever gets enough

knowledge and/or wealth in society, even if his or her roots are in the industrial working class, is destined to have different cultural values and attitudes, to entertain different ambitions and, thus, to join the upper classes. In addition, the Western mass media in general, and the American media in particular, is constantly bombarding all social classes with certain information and images that serve to falsify their consciousness and convince them to be content.

As a matter of fact, Marxism and the socialist economic system it built in the Soviet Union and other countries seems to have been the latest attempt launched by politics to control economics. The late 1980s put an end to that system as socialism failed to live up to expectations, deliver on its promises, undermine capitalism, and empower the industrial working class to seize political control. And with that failure, economics won its last battle against politics.

The success of the Reformation in the seventeenth century was another manifestation of the social transformation that Europe witnessed during the transitional period to the industrial age and beyond. The success of the Reformation ended conflict that the European political and intellectual elite had with the Church in favor of the former, while transforming religion into a socio-cultural institution with moral, but without political authority. Meanwhile, the emergence of the nation-state and its ability to acquire near absolute powers caused obedience to the Church to be replaced by obedience to the state.

Democracy, however, made the absolute reign of the nation-state short. The American and French revolutions, which occurred in the latter part of the eighteenth century, changed the political cultures and structures in Europe and North America fundamentally. They reduced the powers of the state substantially, gave people more power to shape politics, and demanded state recognition of human rights and the accountability of the ruler to the ruled. They, in short, laid the foundations for modern democracy. The people, not religion or the monarchy, became the sole source of political legitimacy.

By the end of the nineteenth century, economic change and social transformation were able to establish themselves as facts of life and

prophets of progress. Social problems and economic recessions, which occurred intermittently at the time, were considered setbacks and pauses, not signals of catastrophe requiring a change of heart. In the twentieth century, the century of the greatest scientific and technological revolutions of all times, social and economic change became dynamic, comprehensive and profound; they transformed and continue to transform the totality of the human condition.

In the Third World, social transformation has been very slow; it has also been distorted and largely grounded in the pre-industrial transitional period. In fact, until the middle of the twentieth century, no non-European country, with the exception of Japan, had experienced the Industrial Revolution or even seemed close to entering the industrial age. At the same time, almost every non-European country had been subjected to European colonialism and domination, and therefore came into contact with the industrial civilization. Because of this mixed experience, most of the countries in what we call today the Third World reacted in two simultaneous, yet rather contradictory, ways to the European experience. First, they began to adopt the national state-building model of the West as a socio-political philosophy to resist foreign domination, achieve national independence and industrialize. And second, they began to revive their traditional cultures to protect themselves from European culture, which they perceived as immoral and oppressive.

In most of the Third World countries, nationalism was adopted as a state ideology, while religion was being revitalized and emphasized as the core of the national culture. The combination of nationalism and religion, however, while strengthening political unity and social cohesiveness, gave the socio-cultural and political processes added legitimacy to become the most active and dominant processes in society. Yet, as stated above, a state identity built around nationalism, and a national culture built around religion did not evolve in the Third World naturally to meet internal needs; they came largely in response to external challenges and changed international circumstances. "Social identity becomes most important the moment it seems

threatened; conspicuous forms of boundary maintenance become important when boundaries are under pressure."<sup>54</sup>

Third World nationalism and cultural particularism, as demonstrated in the cases of the former Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and even Turkey and the former Soviet republics, has been little more than a refined form of tribalism, but with more destructive power and a stronger will to use it. Cultural nationalism serves as a special movement to create a collective consciousness on the basis of a fading, largely fictitious past, defining the self as different from and morally superior to the other. Because of the inhibiting impact that nationalism, cultural particularism and religious fundamentalism exercise, socio-cultural transformation, the pre-requisites for emerging from the age of agriculture, could not happen in the Third World. Nevertheless, trade and cultural interaction with the West continued and expanded, causing almost all national economies of the Third World to become dual economies, while national societies were becoming dual societies, each suffering an identity crisis of its own.

### **Social Transformation in the Age of Knowledge**

In the 1980s, the most advanced industrial societies, particularly the United States, began to enter a transitional period leading to a new age, the age of knowledge. It is an age where scientific and technological knowledge are increasingly becoming the most valuable individual and societal assets, and where communications and the mass media are progressively becoming the most effective tools influencing politics and the socio-cultural lives of people everywhere. The emerging new economy is more dependent on information and communications than on any other factor of production. The new jobs that are being created by this economy are knowledge-based; "they require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. They require a different approach to work and a different mind-set. Above all, they require a habit of continuous learning."<sup>55</sup> In fact, the knowledge worker needs to learn how to learn,

how to continue to be interested in learning, and how to update his or her knowledge constantly and apply it efficiently. As a result, education, including training, has become an important industry in and of itself, and not just a basic service.

Being knowledge-based and service-oriented, the new economy is creating new job opportunities for the knowledge worker and the unskilled worker, but little or no job opportunities for other workers. And because of its transitional nature, the new economy is also increasing job insecurity. The blue-collar worker, in order to maintain his position in the knowledge economy, will have to learn new skills, adopt new attitudes, and accept job uncertainty as a fact of life. In other words, he has to change his culture because the culture of the industrial age is not compatible with that of the knowledge age.

The Industrial Revolution and the scientific and technological developments it produced were instrumental in helping agriculture become more productive and in providing more and better-paying jobs for the displaced agricultural workers in the industrial sector. Similarly, the communications and information revolutions are helping industry become much more productive. In the United States, for example, productivity “in the four years ending in the third quarter of 1999 averaged 2.7 percent per annum—triple the rate of the previous four-year period.”<sup>56</sup> Unlike the developments of the industrial age, however, the new, better-paying jobs are not for the displaced industrial worker, but rather for the knowledge worker.

As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the industrial worker to change jobs, ask for more money, or bargain effectively through labor unions. Unions that still have enough power to bargain and carry out effective strikes, such as those of truck drivers and airline pilots, seem to have lost public sympathy. Members of such unions are generally perceived as making more money and having more benefits than most other white and blue-collar workers. Greed, not need, is what drives members of such unions to ask for more, the public seems to think.

The age of knowledge is also the age of specialization, or the age of the highly skilled and specialized worker. This has made it possible for a large and growing number of knowledge individuals to work out of their homes or out of small offices scattered in all corners of the globe. Sophisticated computer networks have enabled such workers to be connected together and to their work places as well as to the world around them, while helping them to share information and coordinate projects. Yet differentiated skills, varied specializations, and scattered locations make it impossible for members of this group to develop class-consciousness, the prerequisite for unionization. It is therefore very difficult to organize and unionize the new knowledge workers, who have become the dominant workers in the new economy.

While the U.S. seems to have reached the middle of the transitional period to the age of knowledge by the end of the twentieth century, most other industrialized nations have just begun to enter that period. Most of them are still languishing in a rather prolonged period of slow change as more and more of their industrial workers are losing jobs to foreign competition. As a result, unemployment in countries like Germany, France, and Belgium has remained high at a time when their middle classes were shrinking. Several reasons bear responsibility for this dilemma, noted among them:

1. Generous government benefits, allowing the unemployed to have decent incomes without work for long periods of time;
2. Government regulations and popular traditions that make it difficult to start a new business with little money, particularly for the young;
3. The prevalence of conservative business traditions that make financial institutions reluctant to take risks and provide venture capital; and
4. Traditional higher education systems that fear change and lack initiative.

Yet despite their present lag behind the U.S., all Western European nations and a few Asian nations, particularly Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and China are expected to complete the transformation

from the industrial to the knowledge age within the first two to three decades of the twenty-first century.

Specialization in the new age of knowledge creates new needs and implies unprecedented consequences. It creates a need to develop new, more complex societal systems to coordinate the work of the knowledge workers and integrate the functions of the ever-growing numbers of organizations and institutions. It makes teamwork, new attitudes and work ethics, and flexible rules essential to performing sophisticated functions and facilitating the accumulation of knowledge. It also makes both success and failure functions of knowledge and cultural attitudes, while making knowledge and changed attitudes preconditions for the generation of wealth. "With knowledge being universally accessible, there will be no excuses for nonperformance. There will be no poor countries. There will only be ignorant countries," wrote Peter Drucker.<sup>57</sup>

Knowledge workers in the new age are capitalists; they possess valuable social capital consisting primarily of specialized skills and unique attitudes that can be invested in several ways and in many places. They have become largely free and less dependent on others. They are modern nomads committed to no particular ideology and sharing little collective memory with others. Their primary interest is to succeed, make the best use of whatever knowledge they may have, and get the most for it. Knowledge workers do not seem to mind wandering from one place to another, from one organization to another, and from one country to another in order to advance technically and succeed materially. They are driven by self-interest and by a competitive marketplace that forces them to become rootless and, for some, ruthless as well. But while they seem less committed to national causes, they seem more interested in human causes.

But since having a sense of belonging to a larger community is a basic human need, social clubs, professional associations, new transnational political parties (such as the Greens) and special issues groups are gradually undermining the traditional institutions of family and community, and creating virtual communities instead. Human rights

groups and organizations such as Amnesty International are attracting today more interest and more members than the traditional political parties in most European countries. Professional organizations, specially medical, scientific and educational associations, are becoming increasingly multinational associations whose primary concern is the advancement of their members and fields of knowledge. Meanwhile, special interest groups are making governments and political elites in democratic countries in general captive to short-term political considerations, causing politics to replace policy and hindering the proper functioning of democratic institutions.

The cumulative nature of knowledge and the continued interaction among the four societal processes are creating a new society that seems destined to live in a perpetual state of change and transformation. Technological and scientific developments on the one hand, and the availability and accessibility of information on the other, make the creation of new job and economic opportunities a fascinating and largely unstoppable social process that allows more people and organizations to succeed than ever before. At the same time, it makes it easy for those who hesitate to join the new age and adopt its culture to fall behind rather quickly, and often permanently.

Societies of all countries are today going through a process of fundamental change and genuine transformation, some much more than others. The strong link between wealth and knowledge on the one hand, and the transitional nature of the changing conditions on the other, are causing the vertical and horizontal fragmentation of societies and their segmentation along socio-cultural lines. As a result, the concept of society, as it traditionally has been defined, has lost much of its meaning. Likewise, the "common good" concept as a socio-political issue has become more abstract and nostalgic than real. Societies are losing their traditional organizing principles and fast becoming colorful collections of ethnic communities, socio-cultural minorities, special interest groups, and socioeconomic classes that compete more and cooperate less with each other. Interests, like people themselves, are becoming more fragmented, often conflicting, and hard to reconcile.

The assimilation of immigrants, especially first generation ones, and other cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic minorities has become very difficult, making the challenge facing every state in this regard one of socio-political and economic integration rather than cultural assimilation.

The American "melting pot" provides a vivid example. Rather than enabling new immigrants to assimilate and identify with the dominant majority, the modern American "melting pot" has proven to be nothing more than an idealistic notion without much substance. As Nathan Glazer and Daniel A. Moynihan discovered during their study of immigrant communities in the United States, "rather than eradicating ethnic differences, modern American society has actually created new forms of self-awareness in people, which is expressed in a concern about roots and origins. Moreover, many Americans continue to use their ethnic networks actively when looking for a job or a spouse."<sup>58</sup>

Residential segregation and social discrimination in America, which came under earnest attack in the 1960s, have since been joined by economic discrimination and intellectual segregation. While the former have been eased substantially, the latter seem to be tightening. In an age of continuous change and transformation, where economics and knowledge are intertwined and knowledge is quickly becoming the only way for advancement and integration in society, economic discrimination and intellectual segregation are denying most minorities the only opportunity that really counts to advance and be recognized.

### **Classes in Society**

As knowledge becomes the key economic resource and the major means of advancement in life, the knowledge elite become the core of the leading class in society, and its culture, or, to be more precise, its subculture, the dominant one. And because cultural attitudes tend to be more of a mind-set, they greatly influence the capacity of individuals and socio-cultural groups to develop and succeed in life. The socioeconomic gaps that separate and largely define social classes in a typical industrial society, therefore, are becoming increasingly socio-cultural

divides, separating members of each group and leading them to live rather different lives. Since success is primarily a function of both knowledge and attitude, socioeconomic classes become manifestations of socio-cultural gaps. In other words, individuals and groups having the right knowledge and attitudes are more likely to succeed and be rich; individuals and groups that lack the proper knowledge and the right attitudes are more likely to fail and be poor. Within each socio-cultural group, however, there will be socioeconomic ones as well.

Recent developments seem to indicate that the knowledge society of the future is likely to be divided into five different groups that will replace the three socioeconomic classes of a typical industrial society:

1. **The Privileged Class:** Members of this class are expected to represent about five percent of the knowledge society and to own or manage a country's major business concerns. Such businesses concerns will include financial and marketing institutions, the mass media, entertainment and telecommunications companies, prestigious consulting and law firms, large advertising agencies, healthcare businesses, technology and Internet companies, and a few others. As a special elite rooted primarily in economics and knowledge, members of the privileged class are expected to avoid deep involvement in politics. Instead, they will likely concentrate on accumulating wealth, and shaping and reshaping people's cultures and attitudes through the mass media and philanthropy. The privileged class will also include the political elite, whose functions are expected to be largely limited to serving the interests of the class to which it belongs, rather than to protecting the interests of the public or the nation at large.
2. **The Upper Class:** Members of this class are expected to represent about 20 to 25 percent of the total population of a typical knowledge society. They will be people who manage the bureaucracy in government and large corporations and organizations, as well as scientists, researchers, college professors, computer specialists, high-ranking members of the armed forces, and all other highly skilled workers. Members of this class will share with the

privileged class its culture, most of its attitudes, and to some degree its ambitions as well, but not its wealth or influence. As an associate class of the privileged one, the upper class will assist those on the top to continue their hold on economic and information power. This will make it more of a mediating class capable of bridging the knowledge gap between those who are above it and others beneath it, enabling those on the top to employ and sometimes exploit the less fortunate without even having to interact with them.

3. **The National Class:** Members of this class are expected to represent about 40 percent of the total population of the future knowledge society. But as the knowledge society matures, the size of this class will diminish, enlarging the sizes of the classes above and beneath it. Members of this class will provide the core of every bureaucracy and will run the manufacturing operations of every plant. They will include the present-day blue-collar workers, hospital and service workers in jobs where only some knowledge and few skills are required, the bulk of the armed forces, schoolteachers, owners of every type of retail and service store, and the financially comfortable retired people. Members of this class will in fact be the remnants of the old industrial middle class, who will inherit its culture and be attached to its way of life. Because of their makeup and cultural background, most members of this class will be conservative and content, and less knowledgeable and ambitious, but more politically active than other classes. They will be willing, probably more so than any other class in the knowledge society, to abide by the rules set by the elite and promoted by its media. And this will make the national class a dependent class easily led and manipulated. Being fairly large, content, and rather nationalistic, members of this class are expected to be a pillar of stability rather than a force of change. Meanwhile, the social backgrounds and cultural attitudes of this class will make most of its members eager to enlist in the armed forces. For some, the armed forces will be the

primary, if not the only, opportunity to earn a decent income and guarantee a secure retirement. Neither of the two classes above this one is expected to find enlisting in the armed forces an attractive option, or its doctrine a worthy ideology.

4. **The Alienated Class:** Members of this class are expected to represent between 25 and 30 percent of the knowledge society, or a little more than the poor class in a traditional industrial society. They will be people who work on farms and in service jobs requiring no particular knowledge or skills, and will also include most of the retired and the poor who are living primarily on social security and government subsidies. In addition, members of this class will include most of the new and illegal immigrants, and most of the cultural and racial minorities who are discriminated against. Because of their diversified cultural backgrounds and poor economic conditions, members of this class are expected to be religiously conservative and less inclined to participate in politics.
5. **The Angry Class:** Members of this group are expected to represent about 3 to 4 percent of society. They will be people who live in slums, who are disfranchised, who are imprisoned or have previous convictions, who are chronically unemployed, homeless and/or drug-addicted, and others engaged in illegal drug trade and crime. Members of this group are expected to be the principal source of social problems, including crime and domestic violence. This will be the class that needs help the most but is least prepared to take advantage of whatever help may be made available to it.

More people are expected to be imprisoned in the future knowledge society, and the law and businesses associated with imprisonment will have enormous effect on the prevailing culture. The United States, which is leading the way toward the creation of a knowledge society, may have given us an indication of what to expect in the near future; it is an example that must not be allowed to become the norm. Eric Schlosser, referring to the United States, says, "No other nation in

human history has ever imprisoned so many of its citizens for the purpose of crime control."<sup>59</sup> The state of California, for example, had by the end of 1998 "the biggest prison system in the Western industrialized world...the state holds more inmates in its jails and prisons than do France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands combined."<sup>60</sup>

The first two classes, the privileged and upper classes, are expected to form one socio-cultural group and thus to share the same culture; however, they will be separated by wealth and power. The movement of members of the upper class toward the top will be possible but limited; it will be more a function of connections than of knowledge and hard work. Being individualistic and mobile, members of these two classes will have little familial and community memories. Traditional ethics and moral values are expected to play a limited role in the culture of the privileged as well as in the culture of the angry classes, making trust between most groups hard to come by.

The third and fourth classes, the national and alienated ones, will share similar cultures, but not the same culture, because each group will include different socio-cultural groups and religious minorities. Because of these differences, members of these two classes will not form a subsociety of their own. Cultural and religious differences will make relationships between them difficult, at times conflicting, while making solidarity within each group relatively strong. Being group-oriented and settled, members of these classes will retain collective memories that serve to perpetuate their social statuses, sustain solidarity, and complicate intragroup communications and relationships. Ethics and morality are expected to play a significant role in the subcultures of these classes, making trust among members of each class more direct and personal and an expression of their attachment to and belief in traditional values.

The last class, the angry class, will be an underclass having its own subculture, a culture that could be called the "culture of nonculture." It will have little business ethics, will abide by no recognized rules or laws, and will have very little to tie its members together. It is expected

to be a largely hopeless community of angry and submissive people, where the angry and the strong suppress, exploit, and even denigrate the weak and the helpless.

The privileged class will perform the role of the brain in the knowledge society, while the mediating class performs the role of the heart and the nervous system. The national and alienated classes, meanwhile, will perform the role of the legs, feet and hands that carry the body around and put the food in its mouth. The angry class will be viewed by the larger society as harmful and potentially poisonous.

Every society, regardless of its level of development and complexity, has social classes that reflect both socio-cultural and socioeconomic differences. Each social class has its own economic base and cultural shade. Social classes that are close to each other economically are likely to be also close culturally. Because knowledge and wealth reinforce one another, as cultural gaps between social groups deepen, the socioeconomic differences increase; and as socioeconomic gaps widen, socio-cultural differences deepen. Thus, socio-cultural and socioeconomic gaps are intertwined, the narrower the former, the smaller the latter, and the larger the latter, the deeper the former.

Since cultures are the product of civilizations, people with different cultures tend to be divided along civilizational lines. The knowledge people of the world and especially those most involved in shaping the new economy will most likely live in the knowledge civilization and reflect its culture. The industrial working classes of the world, and especially those living in Europe and North America, will live in the industrial civilization and reflect its culture. Most other peoples of the Third World, and some of the non-European minorities residing in Europe and North America, will live in the agricultural age and reflect its culture.

In the old tribal society, customs performed the role of the law in modern society; people accepted tribal customs because they were acculturated in their world. People were equal; they had the same culture and the same economic base and therefore belonged to the same and only social class in society.

In the agricultural society, law became more complicated, and its sources more differentiated. These sources were, and to a great extent still are, tradition, religion and politics. The ruler represents the law; his words and deeds have the power of the law. People, as a result, have little or no rights, only obligations. Whatever rights people may have in such a society are not considered entitlements given to them at birth, but rather a grant from the ruler or from God. When politics controls and incorporates religious authority, ruler and God tend to become practically one and the same. The former speaks in the name of the latter, and the latter can be reached only through obedience to the former. Society is divided into socio-political classes that incorporate socioeconomic differences. People are either rich or poor; no real middle class exists.

In the industrial society, law is made by people and subject to their free will. The primary objective of the law is to protect people from both religion and the ruler. People, as a result, have rights and obligations that tend to be equal. People define their own rights and obligations, tying personal freedoms to social responsibility. Yet a desire to expand individual freedoms, and a belief in the goodness of individuals have led people to overlook the dangers inherent in the behavior of a free society, allowing crime to spread and poverty to increase and become endemic. Increased and diversified economic activities create opportunities that enable some to get rich and form an upper class, many to come second and form a middle class, and others to fail and form a poorer, lower class.

In the knowledge society, law is becoming more complicated and, because of increasing life complexity, less able to focus on issues of concern to the public. People, as a result, are gaining more freedom and becoming more individualistic, feeling that they have many rights and few obligations. Personal freedoms, most people seem to think, are limitless and must not be constrained. Money is allowed to buy justice, making the law largely a tool to serve the interests of the powerful and to protect the privileges of the rich. The pardons granted to criminals and fugitives by president Bill Clinton during his last day in

office demonstrate the power of money and its ability to buy justice. People are slowly being divided anew into rich and poor, and as the rich get richer and the poor get relatively poorer, the middle class shrinks in size and power.

In a traditional agricultural society, leadership is largely authoritarian and domination is legitimized through traditions and religion and exercised through coercion. In an industrial society, authority is largely democratic; it is legitimized through regular elections and exercised through the courts and other governmental institutions. In the emerging knowledge society, authority is becoming weak and formless; it is legitimized through elite consensus, exercised through scattered centers of power, some of which are international, and facilitated by media manipulation of public opinion.

## Chapter Four

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### Processes of Change

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Societal processes of change are mechanisms that developed automatically over time to coordinate and synchronize the functions of the many systems in society. They include the socio-cultural process, the political process, the economic process, and the infomedia process. And unlike social systems, societal processes do not abide by certain rules and are not subject to control by any socio-political entity or authority. Nevertheless, they tend to reflect the philosophical orientation of society and the developmental stage of its economy. Together, they form the larger framework through which all systems function and all changes are introduced and managed in society.

Each societal process has tasks to perform, objectives to pursue, and logic of its own to guide its functions. But since no change can be realized without affecting the roles and relative positions of all major players in society, no process can function freely or independently. Every societal process affects the functioning of all other processes, and is affected by them. Despite this interdependence, however, in each era or stage of human development, one of the societal processes has distinguished itself as the major force of transformation, overshadowing, and sometimes dominating, the other processes.

In an effort to become more effective and capable of performing targeted tasks, all processes exhibit, in varying degrees, a willingness

to change, adapt, and be creative. This willingness is shaped by a strong desire to gain more power and outperform other processes, which dictates that each process compete and cooperate with the others to make its goals attainable. Each process acts and changes under the influence of the following forces:

1. A built-in mechanism to adapt as circumstances change in order to be more effective, creative and relevant;
2. A desire to influence the other processes to make them more responsive to its needs, or less obstructive of its way;
3. An attitude that anticipates change by other processes, particularly change perceived as having the potential to undermine its own position; and
4. An impulse to react to actions taken by other processes and to changes experienced by them.

The socio-cultural process is the oldest process; it was born with the first human societies and provided them with systems to organize themselves and sustain their unity over time. When religion and the idea of God were discovered thousands of years ago, the belief system built around them emerged as the core of the socio-cultural process. And because religious beliefs in general insist upon their own universal and eternal truth, the socio-cultural process became a force of stability and continuity rather than change and transformation.

In the early stages of agrarian life, political authority began to emerge and develop, introducing the political process in societal life. In the beginning, this process was limited in scope; but with the maturity of the age of agriculture, the growth of population, and the expansion of trade, it assumed more powers and responsibilities, spurring the formation of large states, the amassing of fighting armies, the centralization of authority, and the creation of empires.

In a later, more advanced agrarian stage, the economic process evolved and began to play an active role in society, causing the roles of the other processes to change. This state lasted until the dawn of the industrial age, when the mass media was born and began slowly to transform itself into a societal process.

### **The Socio-Cultural Process**

The socio-cultural process includes the social forces, institutions, ideas, goals, and activities that shape, define, and manage the social and cultural affairs of nations. It performs its tasks by preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of nations, emphasizing traditional values and belief systems, clarifying the dividing lines between ethno-national and religious groups within society, and responding to external challenges and altered political, economic and technological circumstances. Since the major organizing principles of this process are values, belief systems, and traditions, the socio-cultural process has traditionally represented the forces of stability and continuity in society.

A stable core of values and beliefs and a simple, rather changeless agricultural way of life gave the socio-cultural process the opportunity to dominate societal life in general until the end of the European Middle Ages. The age of the Renaissance brought many changes to life conditions, causing the socio-cultural process to enter a new stage of development and transformation. The expansion of trade and other economic activities, the questioning of religious teachings, the advancement of science and technology, the increasing complexity of life in cities, and subsequently the strengthening of the state served to undermine many of the old values and question the rationality of older beliefs and traditions. During the age of industry, the role of the socio-cultural process was thus weakened; it could no longer lead unchallenged. Nevertheless, it continued to provide the glue that held people together, giving them a community to belong to, while giving society an identity of its own to differentiate itself from others.

In the second half of the twentieth century, this process began to lose its balance and to influence societal change in ways that seem more negative than positive, particularly in the Third World. Individuals, groups, social classes, and institutions connected to the expanding culture of consumerism have begun to promote new values and build new relationships and, in the process, to undermine traditional values and relationships. Meanwhile, ethnic and religious minorities and

traditional groups, feeling the enormity of change, have become more conservative and assertive, and more protective of older ways of life. In the Third World, forces of traditionalism and nationalism have begun to view the new values and lifestyles promoted by the West and its media as a new wave of cultural imperialism that must be resisted. Due to these trends, most Third World societies have begun to witness the crystallization of two major intellectual trends competing for socio-cultural and political dominance in society.

Social forces that are able to understand the true meaning of global change and appreciate the importance of new technologies and scientific discoveries are advocating rapid change and promoting modernization. Because these forces see change as serving their own interests, they claim that the economic and technological imperatives of the time demand a positive response to almost everything that is modern, including non-traditional values and lifestyles. In contrast, social forces that lack the capacity to comprehend the nature of technological and economic change are unable to reconcile themselves to the new values and attitudes dictated by such change; they consequently are calling for the preservation of traditions and the revival of the past. Meanwhile, no balance between the old and the new is sought, and no serious efforts are made to reconcile differences between conservatism and progressivism.

The socio-cultural process in almost every country in the world is witnessing today a crisis that is largely due to its inability to adapt quickly to accommodate technological, scientific, and economic change. This gives rise to a new phenomenon in which a dual society is created in every state, particularly in its largest cities. One society is generally characterized by affluence, consumerism and liberalism, while the other is dominated by poverty, traditionalism, and conservatism. And this, in turn, creates deep socio-cultural and socioeconomic divides among people who live in neighboring communities. People who belong and claim allegiance to the same country, culture, and nation are living two different lives socially, economically, and intellectually.

“The idea of culture as an identity...is going by the wayside in the realm of geopolitics.”<sup>61</sup>

Despite the deepening of the socioeconomic and socio-cultural lines that divide all societies in every country, globalization, particularly in the economic and media-information fields, is creating three unique cultures. One is global, to which the rich, the well-traveled and the best-educated of the world belong; the second is national, to which the majority of each society belong; and the third is a minority subculture based largely on ethnicity and religion, to which the poor, the ill-educated and the ideologically conservative belong.

### **The Political Process**

The political process includes the forces, activities, ideas, goals, and institutions that shape and manage the political affairs of nations. It usually performs its tasks by responding to political needs at the local level, defining political goals and strategies at the national level, and dealing with trade and security issues at the international level. Traditionally, political decisions at the national level are taken by the state, most political activities are carried out by national institutions, and all goals are determined by the nation’s overall philosophy and perceived need to advance the national interest.

The political process emerged in its primitive form as an extension of the traditional socio-cultural process. The growth of populations and the establishment of agricultural communities in need of a super-structure to regulate the sharing of water resources, to resolve conflict, and to provide protection against gangs and foreign invaders were instrumental in defining the role and powers of the political process. Over time, the wide range of activities performed by this process enabled it to dominate societal life in general and acquire authority over all other processes. But as economic activity increased, trade expanded and democracy spread, the state was impelled to recognize the rights of people to participate in shaping policy and the direction of politics. Consequently, the grip of the state on most aspects of life

began to weaken, and the popular commitment to a national interest began gradually to lose its appeal.

Today, no decisions are taken freely without the influence of special interest groups that represent one of the most active socio-political forces in every democratic society. In addition, economic globalization, global environmental concerns, and a growing commitment to promoting human rights and democracy everywhere are making political decisions and most politicians answerable to a world public opinion and subject to the scrutiny of an aggressive global media and numerous nongovernmental organizations. The gradual disintegration of traditional society, wider recognition of the legitimacy of socio-cultural diversity, economic globalization, and increasing life complexity have changed the way politics used to function.

Consequently, the political process of nations, particularly the democratic ones, has begun to lose coherence and focus. Politics today is seldom able to develop a clear and comprehensive set of objectives that are realistic, achievable, and in the national interest. The national interest, in fact, has become a concept easy to speak of but hard to define. The door has become, therefore, open for internal and external forces and for economic and non-economic considerations to influence the course of political action. Global developments since the early 1980s, for example, have caused the political process to become more active at the local and international levels. These developments include the recurrence of economic recessions, a more open international trading system, and the migration of industries and jobs from one country to another. "Entrepreneurs built the national companies that destroyed local companies at the end of the nineteenth century, and they are building the global companies that are destroying national companies at the end of the twentieth century," says Lester Thurow.<sup>62</sup> Forced to respond to many groups and developments with varied and, at times contradictory, objectives, the political process has become more reactive than proactive, and more vulnerable to the influence of the other processes, particularly the economic and infomedia processes.

## The Economic Process

The economic process includes the forces, activities, institutions, goals, ideas, and business organizations that shape economic policy and manage the economic affairs of nations. It usually performs its tasks by responding to market forces that reflect the preferences of consumers and to profit incentives that motivate people to engage in business activities. New investment opportunities created by technological change and changed domestic and international business climates also provide strong incentives, motivating the economic process to expand its activities. Because most profits are made by producing and selling goods and services, and since the end users of such goods and services are everywhere, the economic process functions at all levels and in all places. However, the political process acts sometimes to limit the ability of this process to work freely. Such acts are usually taken to protect certain national industries, or to pursue certain strategic and political goals.

Since products, unlike political decisions, can be marketed for profit wherever demand exists, the economic process has expanded to include all human endeavors. Attention, therefore, is paid to all potential markets and to all business opportunities. Because profit is the major organizing principle of business decisions in general, economic considerations, rather than political and ideological ones, guide this process and influence its relationships to other societal processes. In addition, mergers of important industries across national lines, the internationalization of money and investment markets, and the increasing mobility of capital and human talent are leading the economic process to become global.

Consequently, foreign markets and international competition have begun to claim priority, forcing the economic process to resort to expansion, more mergers, downsizing, and relocating to increase market share, improve competitiveness, reduce cost, and maximize economic returns. As a result, business social responsibility has declined, the national interest has lost its appeal, and the economic

process has begun to focus primarily on issues that have the capacity to influence its ability to function independently and pursue its goals freely and globally.

Local and national causes, such as the need to create more jobs, upgrade employee training, and further the development of surrounding communities, are today receding in importance as far as the economic process is concerned. Because of this attitude, states and local politicians have become more active. While they demand that the political process gives more attention to local issues, they show more willingness to acquiesce to the demands of the economic process. Local communities, being forced to fight for themselves, are compelled to reduce corporate taxes to discourage firms from leaving, while providing generous tax incentives and subsidies to other businesses to entice them to move to their communities. In both cases, local communities are losing revenues that could otherwise be used to provide much-needed educational, recreational, and other socio-cultural services.<sup>63</sup>

Changes that have occurred since the Industrial Revolution have increased the power and elevated the status of economics in society. The prestige and moral authority commanded by religious, political, and intellectual leaders in the past have gradually been transferred to the domain of wealth. Corporate leaders today have more power than most politicians, are listened to more often than intellectuals, and are followed by more people than most religious men. The influence of the economic process has become greater than expected and desired by most people, particularly on politics. In his book *The Buying of the President*, author Charles Lewis wrote that "the wealthiest interests [in America] bankroll and, in effect, help to preselect the specific major candidates months and months before a single vote is cast anywhere."<sup>64</sup> As a result, the people who elect presidents and put them in office have become a mere afterthought of those elected.

It was previously thought that necessity is the mother of invention, but the involvement of the media in the commercialization of products and services on the one hand, and the institutionalization of research

and development as an integral part of the economic process on the other have changed this perception. While new technologies and devices are becoming byproducts of constant scientific investigation and technological development, media promotion of such products is creating new human and industrial needs that never existed or felt before.

For example, emphasis on crime in the United States has created a need for personal security and property protection. By heightening people's fears, the media in conjunction with the economic process have helped develop, in just a few decades, a multi-billion dollar industry. And due to sustained emphases on lawlessness and crime, the need for security continues to evolve and expand; people are encouraged to update or replace older security systems, get more protection, and support the building of more prisons. Fear of crime and imprisonment of criminals, meanwhile, have made the building and management of prisons in the United States a cornerstone of economic development in many impoverished areas—a lucrative business of more than \$35 billion a year.<sup>65</sup> And as the need for personal security and property protection in the United States increases, people in most other countries have become aware of the need and the technology to satisfy it, causing the market for security technologies and services to expand everywhere.

### **The Infomedia Process**

The infomedia process includes the activities, organizations, groups, ideas, goals, and policies that manage the flow of information, including the news and entertainment programs. This process performs its tasks by, among other things, responding to events and crises, analyzing official policy, providing educational and recreational programs, collecting and disseminating information, and following trends of change in other processes. The infomedia process also provides the other processes with the means to promote their own causes and reach their constituencies.

The infomedia process began to develop steadily and play a transformational role in society after printing was revolutionized in Europe in the fifteenth century. Before that, most people in the world communicated by means of the spoken word, not the printed one. But since the spoken word was limited in its ability to reach a large audience, particularly under then-prevailing transportation and political conditions, ideas could not travel quickly or spread easily; they always encountered obstacles and were often subject to distortion and misinterpretation.

With the revolution of printing, "the printed word exerted an increasingly powerful impact. In states that succeeded in controlling the press, most notably in Spain but also in Eastern Europe, the monarchs maintained their grip on religious, social and political thought."<sup>66</sup> In fact, the development of the modern media in the twentieth century has enabled the state, especially in the Third World and in the communist countries, to gain unprecedented power to manipulate and control most spheres of societal life. "Before the twentieth century, states could seek or claim such control. They could not exercise it. Now they can," writes Thomas Hugh.<sup>67</sup>

The twin revolutions of communications and information have vastly energized the media and expanded its reach. They have enabled the media to diversify its contents and activities, increase its influence, and transform itself gradually into a powerful societal process. The ability of this process to reach everyone, everywhere, at all times, and its willingness to provide information as well as cultural and entertainment programs continuously has given it the power to influence attitudes and values and to mold and remold public opinions and world cultures.

Because of the immense power of the media, the political and socio-cultural processes have tried to impose their will on it, subjecting its activities to certain regulations and ethical standards. The results, however, have been mixed. In the West, particularly in the United States, the media functions freely, and the standards it has agreed to abide by are of its own making. As a result, it has been able to develop

a unique identity of its own, and to promote a culture that reflects certain attitudes and values not necessarily shared with the public at large. Consequently, members of the elite that owns and manages this process find themselves almost always in conflict with those managing and directing the socio-cultural process, particularly the religious leaders and conservative activists. In the Third World, the media cannot escape government control; it is strictly regulated, controlled or owned by the state.

As the media was gaining the power and freedom to collect, analyze, manipulate, and disseminate information regarding many aspects of life, this power was increasingly being concentrated in the hands of a few conglomerates and smaller groups of media elites. "Our 25 leading newspaper corporations own a third of all American newspapers, control two-thirds of circulation and have more than \$30 billion in annual revenues, half of which come from non-newspaper activities," wrote Richard Harwood in 1994.<sup>68</sup> Merger activities since then, of which the \$130 billion AOL-Time Warner is only one example, have made media ownership and power more concentrated than ever before. Freedom of expression, which most Western societies preach religiously, "glosses over the tremendous influence of the media, which is not controlled by any democratic participation," wrote Quincy Right.<sup>69</sup>

Although the expanding reach of the Internet is slowly eroding the power of the media, the impact of the Internet on the mass media is still limited and could be curtailed; media and business conglomerates are buying Internet companies and incorporating them into their empires. The merger of Time Warner and America On Line in 2001 is an example of a trend that promises to concentrate media power and influence in the hands of a few large media organizations and therefore business managers. When the merger was completed, both companies gained control of the largest share of U.S. Internet service and entertainment and magazines, and the second largest cable subscriber network. They control today 46% of the U.S. Internet market, 39% of consumer magazines, 23% of entertainment, and 19% of cable subscribers.

Consequently, "consumers will feel AOL and Time Warner's presence in virtually every facet of their lives."<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the media tends, consciously and unconsciously, to propagate the worldview of its elite by giving unequal attention to certain issues and events of public concern, as well as by promoting the views of only a select group of news analysts and experts. It is an attitude that reflects arrogance and encourages the media to substitute opinion for fact and prejudice for knowledge, creating stereotypes that dehumanize some people, glorify others, and deceive many more. "The way the wind is blowing all too often boils down to what the media is conveying. Today, any movement to transform the world is confronted with the dilemma of the mass media. The image of every leader, movement and nation is today at the mercy of the media."<sup>71</sup>

Edwin M. Joder, Jr. recently described the power of the media through the impact it had on the political fortunes of former American presidents Gerald Ford and George Bush. He found that "Gerald Ford was among the most athletic presidents. But when he slipped and stumbled one day on the steps of Air Force One, we gained an instant icon. By the time television, satirical and otherwise, was done, Ford had been diminished, devalued and discounted." As for Bush, "no change of perception so swift and steep can be plausibly explained by objective changes in national conditions. What changed with dazzling swiftness, was the visual perception of Bush from conqueror to a man without a program; or worse, a man without core convictions or a sense of direction."<sup>72</sup>

Media entrepreneurs have become increasingly more interested in making money than in educating the public. They favor profitable programs that feature violence, crime, drugs and sex, even when such programs are socially harmful and morally corrupt. Richard Hardwood finds that the dedication of corporate leaders "to journalism and its essential role in a democratic society is suspect. They are more responsive to the short-term demands of the stock market than to the values their industry supposedly represents."<sup>73</sup>

In the Third World, the development of the transistor radio and television came at a very unfortunate time for the majority of the masses. They came while illiteracy rates were very high, giving radio and television the opportunity to become the major sources of information, education, and entertainment, and thus enabled the spoken word to make a great comeback. Consequently, government control of the media made the manipulation of the masses and the remolding of their opinions and attitudes an achievable goal. And on the public side, it reduced the need to read, causing book publishing, critical analysis, and intellectual thought to suffer greatly. And that served to discourage social transformation and reduce the probability of popular revolt, while allowing political corruption and economic mismanagement to fester, largely unnoticed.

Manipulation of the news and the masses, however, is not a policy that only Third World governments practice. The U.S. government, for example, resorted to such a policy during its military campaign against Iraq in 1990-91 to create and foster a supportive public opinion for its strategic goals and war activities. The Iraqi leader, as a result, was portrayed as evil, and Arabs and Muslims in general were dehumanized. In addition, Iraqi victims of war were rarely seen on television, the mass killing of Iraqi soldiers using deadly weapons was called surgical, civilian casualties were labeled collateral damage, and the effectiveness of U.S. military technology was exaggerated to entice other countries, particularly Arab Gulf states, to buy it.

Nevertheless, modern means of communication and the Internet have created a more alert world public. Communications, in fact, is making people on all sides of the economic, political, cultural, and ideological divides fairly aware of what exists on the opposite side. It provides the opportunity for people everywhere to be linked together, causing unprecedented social and cultural interaction. It also causes the destruction of socio-cultural barriers that made communications across cultures very difficult in the past. In addition, it encourages the development of a world culture, and facilitates the rebirth of numerous

viable minority subcultures. "The digital revolution allows once-ignored and even shunned groups to become organized."<sup>74</sup>

Kenichi Ohmae wrote recently, "In those societies open to the influence of the multimedia, the critical balance is already beginning to shift. Children and teenagers are, at deep levels of sensibility and knowledge, becoming much more like their counterparts in other societies similarly influenced than they are like the older generations within their own culture."<sup>75</sup> This means that the young in societies exposed to the full influence of the infomedia process have already lost their ties to their traditional cultures; they have become followers of an emerging global culture that recognizes no political borders. "The link among generations has been broken; a new link with those sharing similar experiences has been forged."<sup>76</sup>

### **The Processes' Historical Role**

As explained earlier, the socio-cultural process was the first societal process to emerge, followed by the political one. These two processes, concentrating primarily on continuity and stability, worked together and reinforced one another to dominate societal life in general for many centuries. The economic process emerged slowly and grew gradually, gaining strength and momentum only after the Industrial Revolution. And as the economic process began to mature, the infomedia process emerged. These two processes have worked together and continue to reinforce one another, concentrating primarily on change and transformation rather than continuity and stability.

The socio-cultural process worked relentlessly to transform early human settlements into stable agricultural communities, each sharing a particular culture and an identity of its own. The political process committed itself to enlarging the agricultural community into states of many communities; it created nations and empires whose major organizing principle was military power. Both processes, however, had to labor for centuries before they could give society a meaning, define the prerogatives of the state, and develop a national culture.

The economic process, on the other hand, has worked to expand its domain by integrating the major production, consumption, and investment markets, causing all economically active nations to become interdependent. The infomedia process works today to link all peoples together, creating a global village that progressively renders political borders less meaningful and national cultures less particular.

The socio-cultural process of the agricultural age produced great ideas and philosophies, of which religion was the most important. The political process of the late agricultural age and the early industrial age produced great leaders, empires, and ideologies, of which nationalism and colonialism were the most important ones. The economic process of the industrial age produced great technologies, entrepreneurs and industrial conglomerates, as well as capitalism, communism and democracy. The infomedia process is producing great technological innovations, virtual communities, and a global culture, while systematically destroying many of the ideological and cultural systems and symbols created by the other processes.

The socio-cultural process created human communities on the basis of kinship, traditions, belief systems, and shared needs and values. The political process, motivated by political ambitions and ideology, created states and empires that facilitated cultural interaction and domination and helped expand trade, which in turn paved the way for the eventual development of the economic process. The economic process created great technologies and industries; it also impelled people to build new associations on the basis of interests and thus caused interests to become the major organizing principle of international relations. The infomedia process works today to make communications across cultures easier and faster than ever before. It provides both the elites and the masses of the world with the means to communicate instantly and exchange views and information with each other constantly. And in conjunction with the economic process, the infomedia process works relentlessly to create a world free of ideology, a new society free of older traditions and moral constraints, and a new individual having neither roots nor national identity.

The infomedia process uses some of the most sophisticated technological devices and systems, as well as psychological methods, to mold and remold the attitudes of people and link them together; it promotes certain cultural values, undermines others, and creates new ones. Since values are the heart of all cultures, the role of this process in society has been subject to more criticism than praise. And as it makes further advances, "technology will only quicken the pace at which the news is moving from the universal and towards the individualized,"<sup>77</sup> making the fragmentation of societies and national cultures more pronounced. As a result, some people accuse the media of cultural destruction; others call it cultural imperialism.

In each age, the societal process that commands the most authority in society tends also to claim most of its talent. In the agricultural age, the socio-cultural process attracted some of the most talented, employing them in the service of religion to spread the faith and develop its doctrine. When the political process became the most dominant, it attracted many of the talented individuals, employing them as bureaucrats and military leaders in the service of the state. As a result, both the socio-cultural and political processes denied society the opportunity to use its talent for creative activities, directing such talent instead to ensuring continuity and blocking genuine change.

The economic process also attracted many of the most talented in society, employing them in the service of industrial production, technological development, scientific research, and the expansion of financial and business activities. Today, the infomedia process, along with the economic one, attract almost all the available talent in every industrial and post-industrial society, causing communications, information, the Internet, and research and development to become the engines of progress in the emerging knowledge society.

### **Interaction of the Societal Processes**

All socioeconomic activities involve the four processes of change and transformation. When relationships between the four processes

are well defined and in balance, stability usually prevails in society. But when one process attempts to expand its role at the expense of one or more of the other processes, instability ensues. This instability, however, is neither permanent nor necessarily bad; it usually represents a transitional period where both conflict and change are occurring simultaneously and actively influencing one another. But for balance to be restored, a new relationship has to be established around new bases that change the relative roles of the forces involved.

Today, global developments and local conditions are pressuring the economic process to be more sensitive to local needs, while calling for more attention by the political process to international issues. Unemployment, poverty, crime, and environmental neglect accentuate the need for the economic process to give more attention to local issues. The spread of ethno-national conflict, the lack of genuine economic progress in almost all Third World countries, and international migration of people due to severe economic and political conditions call for the political process to get more involved at the international level.

Meanwhile, the socio-cultural process is being forced to abandon its traditional role of unifying nations and communities around shared values and traditions. Instead, it is being impelled to move in two contradictory directions at once in order to accommodate the needs of a more globalized economic process on the one hand, and to respond to the need of minorities for cultural recognition and political freedom on the other. While the development of a global culture based on the values and lifestyles of Western capitalism, consumerism, and liberalism accommodates an economic process eager to expand internationally, the revival of minority subcultures serves to strengthen minority participation in the political process.

The infomedia process, meanwhile, serves as the main vehicle facilitating the movement of the other processes. While it often exposes the failure of the political process to attend properly to local and international issues, it identifies new global opportunities and helps open new markets for the economic process to explore. It also enables the socio-cultural process to develop a global culture at the international

level and numerous viable subcultures at the local and national levels. And as it assumes the traditional role of political parties in debating public issues, it tends to expose the shortcomings of the economic process, particularly its lack of commitment to national causes. In addition, it undermines the power of the socio-cultural process, denying it the opportunity to maintain national unity and preserve people's identity.

Interaction among the four societal processes constantly changes the balance of relationships in society. During transitional periods and periods of profound change, relationships tend to become rather chaotic, causing older rules and regulations to become less effective. Older theories of thought and models of analysis become outdated before new ones can be developed to deal with the changed situations, causing confusion and oftentimes a loss of direction. At such times, intellectual activity and creativity is usually revived and encouraged to go beyond the known and the traditional; it often causes the conventional wisdom and its logic to be undermined and new ways of thinking and worldviews to appear and be legitimized. In transitional periods, however, it is always easier to explain emerging situations than to control them or predict their outcomes.

Chaos and order exist together in one world. They are two sides of one social process, and neither can survive long without the other. Order without some chaos, just like total cooperation without competition, characterizes social systems that lack dynamism and are unable to develop or adapt to new circumstances. Uncontrolled chaos, on the other hand, characterizes systems that are badly conceived, confused, unproductive, and thus headed toward disintegration. As Lester Thurow has said, "America has more than enough chaos to be creative, but too little order to use its ideas in the most efficient ways. Japan has more than enough order to be efficient but too little chaos to be creative."<sup>78</sup>

A new theory of social change to explain chaos and order and how and why they erupt is badly needed to bridge the widening gap between the reality of politics and the imperatives of economics in the age of knowledge. Such a theory should make it possible for us to use

the certainty of order to regulate chaos, use the dynamics of chaos to transform order, and employ the propensities of both to resolve conflict and make progress a reality shared by all. The “Locomotive Theory” outlined in the following chapter is an attempt to explain social transformation throughout history by placing chaos and order, conflict and change, in their proper historical and societal contexts. This theory should enable all concerned parties to make an educated judgment regarding both the past and the future and how they may relate to one another.

## Chapter Five

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### Theory of History

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The history of human development from the age of the hunter and gatherer to the age of knowledge has been a turbulent one. It has involved massive—at times bloody and chaotic—political, economic and socio-cultural transformations. These transformations have affected all aspects of human life: social and economic structures, political organizations and modes of production, scientific and technological developments, and environmental settings. Nature, geography, ideas, leaders, innovations, and chance have contributed in different ways and to varying degrees to the making of human history. Among these various factors, this chapter argues that changes in the mode of production has been the most important force influencing the course of history.

History books are records of important events and explanations of what caused such events and how they influenced life conditions in general. Theories of history are attempts to detect the main currents of history; they try to define the historical process, identify its major forces and describe its path. An interest in world history has led historians to rediscover ancient peoples and to investigate the possibility that something larger than specific events, actions, leaders, and ideas might be driving history and charting its course. Conceptions of world history as a whole seek to present the history of humankind as a process that has a logic and life of its own.

Historians and philosophers of history have been unable to agree on a unified theory of world history. Their individual points of departure and their varied cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and specific interests have prevented them from reaching the same or even similar conclusions. The major theories that have been produced see history in general as being either linear, cyclical, or chaotic. Although the three conceptions are dissimilar, they have all survived, and none has been either completely discredited or universally accepted. The many contradictions of history have convinced historians to find merits in each conception.

### **The Linear Theory of History**

Hegel is considered the father of the linear theory. He and Marx were responsible for advancing the idea that contradictions exist as an inherent characteristic of social life. Both philosophers concluded that contradictions cause conflict, and that through conflict new social formations or syntheses emerge where old contradictions are resolved and new ones are born. As the process continues, contradictions become smaller and less basic, leading ultimately to the formation of a harmonious system where all basic contradictions are resolved. Both Hegel and Marx saw the continuous search for syntheses as a process reflecting the spirit of history and charting its course. This process would, according to Hegel and Marx, lead gradually but systematically to the resolution of all contradictions and the establishment of the ultimate conditions for a life without conflict.

The basic contradictions in society, according to Hegel, are related to freedom, and, therefore, the conflict they cause and the syntheses they produce are of a political nature. Systems of thought and socio-political systems fall apart and disintegrate under the pressure of their own internal contradictions, he claimed. They are then replaced by new and more complex systems that contain less fundamental contradictions. This seemingly unending process of systemic change explains

the notion of historical dialectics put forth by the Hegelian and Marxist philosophies of history.<sup>79</sup>

Hegel sees progress in history as a result of the blind interplay of human passions that leads to conflict, revolution, and war. For him, "nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion."<sup>80</sup> He further maintained that "the history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom,"<sup>81</sup> which itself is driven by passion. Hegel argued that communities have very specific reasons for their own self-development, and that these reasons drive human progress and chart the course of history. "Each [historical] period is involved in such peculiar circumstances, exhibits a condition of things so strictly idiosyncratic, that its conduct must be regulated by considerations connected with itself, and itself alone."<sup>82</sup> The implication is that all communities are based on self-organizing principles that are beyond the control of any person or group, and that the process through which social goals are sought and accomplished is a rational one. Therefore, the history of the world is a rational, self-regulating, self-generating process. Hegel asserts that "God governs the world; the actual working of his government—the carrying out of His plan—is the history of the world."<sup>83</sup> For history to move and make progress, it has to have agents. The agents, according to Hegel, are great historical men with visions regarding the issues that reflect the will of the world's spirit.

Since history is a rational process, it must have a destination or a goal toward which to progress. For Hegel, that ultimate goal is human freedom. "I am free when my existence depends upon myself," he wrote.<sup>84</sup> History, therefore, will reach its final destination and come to an end when freedom prevails. Since the end of history represents the highest state of human consciousness, it can be attained only after many syntheses; freedom must thus travel slowly and be realized gradually. At that point, the final syntheses will emerge and conditions of political freedom and social harmony will be established. However, this freedom can be achieved only under a democratic state. At history's terminus, the state would bloom and prosper; its virtues would become

apparent. The great historical men would no longer be needed to play the role of history's agents; they would be replaced by the new state, which would embody history's reason and spirit. After the battle of Jena in 1806 gave birth to the liberal democratic state in Germany that Hegel perceived, he declared the end of history.

Hegel described the spread of civilization from the East to the heart of Europe via Greece and Rome over thousands of years. He wrote, "Eastern nations knew only that one is free; the Greek and Roman world only that some are free; while we [the Germanic world] know that all men absolutely are free."<sup>85</sup>

Before Marxism, the dominant view of history among its philosophers was based on the conception that idealism and morality were the causes of historical change, and that ideas, men and the state were the primary agents of change. Marx, in contrast, saw the basic contradictions in society as emanating not from social or political relations, but rather from society's economic structure. For him, "the mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual process of life...It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness."<sup>86</sup>

According to Marx, the key to understanding a historical epoch, a social formation, or a chain of historical events lies exclusively in the economic domain. The economic structure of society constitutes the basis "on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."<sup>87</sup> Social relations and structures in the Marxist sense are an outcome of the mode of production and, because of that, society is formed and reformed by forces over which people have little control and whose consequences they cannot escape. "With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."<sup>88</sup>

The mode of production, according to Marxist thought, includes two components: the social forces of production and the relations of production, which together represent two sides of the same process. While the social forces of production represent man's relationship

with nature, the relations of production represent man's relationship with other men. And while these two components of the mode of production are tightly connected to each other, the type of ownership of the means of production governs the nature of their interaction.

People are the primary forces of production and the actors who invent and develop the material means of production, according to Marxism. They are also the forces that set the means of production in motion. The human forces of production, however, do not include all people; they include only the working class, or the laborers. Relations of production are the social ties that develop among people during the production process, as they perform their tasks as workers or capitalists. Production relations are a function of property relations, or the ownership of the means of production at any given time. Property ownership, in other words, determines the nature of the relationship that ties the forces of production to the relations of production.

When property ownership is communal, as it used to be in primitive societies and is supposed to be in communist ones, argued Marx, the society is classless; no basic contradictions exist within its borders. But when property ownership is private, social classes appear, causing contradictions and antagonism between the social classes to arise and conflict to ensue. Economic change to resolve the basic contradiction between the social forces of production and the relations of production would normally lead to a new synthesis, or a new society. But since syntheses contain their own contradictions, economic change would continue and new social formations would consequently emerge. This process is supposed to continue until the basic contradictions had been resolved fundamentally and private ownership of the means of production had been abolished.

The revolution to settle class conflict and resolve the basic contradiction in society will be carried out by the social class that represents the core of the social forces of production, the working class, or the proletariat. It is the class that is most exploited by capital and whose exploitation makes revolt against the existing relations of production inevitable. This proletariat, argued Marx, is not "naturally arising

poor." Rather, exploitation by capital renders members of this class "artificially impoverished."<sup>89</sup>

Notwithstanding his major emphasis on the role of economics and material relations in the making of human history, Marx did not consider the economic structure of society to be the only active force in the historical process. Nor did he consider social, political and cultural superstructures to be passive functions of the economic structure. For Marx, other non-materialistic forces, such as the environment, circumstance and external forces, also influence the economic structure in society.

Progress in history, according to Hegelian thought, is made as people gain more freedom, which is supposed to be "embodied in the modern liberal state."<sup>90</sup> The end of history would, therefore, come when freedom is universal and the liberal democratic state has been established to represent its people and implement their desired principles of liberty and equality. Marx, in contrast, rejected the vision of a liberal democratic state as the embodiment of liberty and equality in society, as well as the notion that its establishment would bring about the end of history. For Marx, the liberal state had failed to resolve the fundamental contradiction in society, and the freedom it brought was only freedom for the bourgeoisie, or the capitalist class. Democracy, Marx argued, is the tool used by the middle class to protect its own interests, which are at odds with those of the proletariat. He envisioned the historical process coming to an end with the establishment of a classless society where class struggle ends and the state withers away.

The conceptions of history articulated by both Hegel and Marx are largely linear interpretations of world history. Because each conception has its own end goal, both conceptions are deterministic. Neither conception of history, therefore, gives people much choice; rather, they narrow substantially the options open to people.

Religion, which received the attention of both Hegel and Marx, is also a linear theory of history that envisions a terminal station where history ends. But the forces and motives that drive history according to religion are neither human nor material; they are heavenly. There is no process of history in religious thought; life is the first and last

station before the end of history, which is also the end of all forms of life. The fate of every person and every thing in life and even in the hereafter is predetermined by an outside, almighty, godly force. God thus becomes the only force determining the beginning of history as well as its end; no human or non-human force can change that.

Both Hegel and Marx considered the consciousness engendered by religion a form of "false consciousness." Hegel maintained that religions were "ideologies which arose of the particular historical needs of the people who believed in them."<sup>91</sup> And since human needs and perceptions of the world change over time, religious consciousness is particular, not universal, and transient, not permanent. Similarly, Marx wrote that it is "man [who] makes religion, religion does not make man." Religion, he added "is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man, who either has not found himself or has already lost himself again."<sup>92</sup> He went on to say that "the abolition of religion as the illusionary happiness of the people is required for their real happiness."<sup>93</sup>

### **The Cyclical Theory of History**

If Hegel is the father of the linear theory of history, Oswald Spengler has been given credit for the cyclical theory. Spengler's inquiry into the nature of the historical process led him to conclude that history moves in cycles. He rejected the linear interpretation of history and its division into the ancient, medieval, and modern ages, a division that implies a progression from the primitive to the advanced.

Spengler viewed history as the story of cultures, of which the Western culture is but one. Cultures "are born, grow, mature, and die with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field."<sup>94</sup> He argued that cultures, while similar, are not related to each other; each culture is an independent creature with a life of its own. Cultures, Spengler maintained, "do not influence, or even genuinely stimulate each other. Thus, if there is any pattern in history, it must be sought, not in developments between the cultures, but in developments within them."<sup>95</sup>

Cultures, according to Spengler, are subject to certain laws, similar to those of biology, that condition them for birth, growth, and decay. Nothing can be done to change this destiny in a fundamental way, Spengler maintained. Although cultures could die prematurely due to outside intervention, they could also linger on after old age without even being able to produce anything of importance.

The normal life span of a culture, Spengler speculated, is about 1,000 years—through which a culture experiences birth, growth, maturity, decay, and death—unless outside forces intervene to interrupt this process. Spengler saw outside intervention as having a negative rather than positive impact on the course of the development of cultures. “Cultures never learn from one another, they never really understand each other, [and] what one cannot understand one cannot learn, and what one cannot learn one cannot be influenced by,” Spengler wrote.<sup>96</sup>

As for the history of the world, Spengler felt that most of it is “historyless,” and therefore rather meaningless. “Considered as a whole, what we should normally call the historical past is a formless expanse of human life within which centers of meaning or significance—that is cultures—from time to time make an appearance and pass away.”<sup>97</sup> This view suggests that nothing of value can be learned from history *per se*; only cultures, and their patterns of development and lifestyles are meaningful. The only thing to learn from history, Spengler seems to imply, is that cultures in general and Western culture in particular are destined to die and not to rise again. New cultures will be born to keep history going, but their lives will be largely meaningless because cultures usually live a lonely life and normally die a natural death, leaving nothing of value behind.

Arnold Toynbee, who was greatly influenced by Spengler and his views regarding the decline of the West, was responsible for developing Spengler’s theory into a fully cyclical one. Toynbee replaced cultures with nations or societies in his historical inquiry, but claimed that history has seen nations rise again. Unlike Spengler, Toynbee saw cultural interaction as inevitable and positive and as being one of the causes of cultural revitalization and national regeneration. In fact, while Spengler

saw cross-cultural interaction as contributing to the old-age ailments of cultures, Toynbee saw cultural old age as being curable by cross-cultural interaction. Toynbee even thought that the West could, with divine intervention, be saved from its fated decline.

Toynbee, like Spengler, saw a positive role for religion in the life of cultures or societies, especially at the beginning of their lives, or during their early stages of development. Toynbee found that religion loses its role and influence as cultures and nations mature and as intellectual and scientific challenges increase. He did recognize, however, that, as cultures enter their final life cycles, religion reappears and assumes an important but different role. Religion in the early stages of development is a force to inspire young cultures and societies; in the last stage, it is a system to comfort the dying. Giambattista Vico, who lived and died before both Spengler and Toynbee, may have been the first modern philosopher to view history as cyclical. He wrote that "history moved in cycles, the change from one stage to the next being accomplished by a process both of growth and decay."<sup>98</sup> Spengler, as a moralist concerned with values, could not see "growth and decay" as simultaneous. Rather, they occur in a sequence. It is a view rooted in the claim that the ascendancy of money and machines in the West had come at the expense of culture, morality and the individual.<sup>99</sup>

### The Chaos Theory

The chaos theory claims that history is a record of unconnected, non-causal events. History, its authors seem to say, does not have any particular logic that guides its movement, and the developments that history experiences do not constitute in themselves a process with any discernible path. Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber can be classified as adherents of the chaotic view of history.

Nietzsche considered life to be a profound tragedy, a struggle from beginning to end. He could not see any real logic or even purpose in history that would oblige us to accept the struggle of life as unquestionable or even worthwhile. His sensitivity to human weakness made

him a moralist who sought to convince people that only they could make their own history. He regarded "traditional Christian morality as a slave morality, incompatible with the great life struggle."<sup>100</sup> And because of that view, he criticized even Martin Luther harshly, accusing him of restoring Christianity "at the very moment when it was vanquished."<sup>101</sup>

Tolstoy, Weber and Nietzsche, according to John Patrick Diggins, "all viewed history as essentially meaningless, an absurd succession of forces and effects that would remain without significance until the thinker strove to make sense of them."<sup>102</sup> Weber in particular adhered to a chaotic view of history, holding that "how humankind acts and confronts historical conditions is more important than any theory of law supposedly governing history itself. History is what we make it."<sup>103</sup> And since what we make is subject to our individual and group will as well as our desire and power, historical events do not follow a consistent logic or a clear path; they are chaotic developments of little meaning except to those who make them. "The concurrence of conditions that brought freedom into existence cannot be repeated, yet humankind rises to dignity only by making history rather than succumbing to it."<sup>104</sup>

At another point, however, Weber seemed to say that history might yet be cyclical. For example, he predicted the inevitable return of aristocracy to democratic societies despite the successes of individualism and democracy, arguing that there is a possibility that history may reverse itself. He wrote, that the "demagicalization of the world under capitalist and scientific secular forces cannot continue for long, emptying life of meaning and value without creating the conditions for counter-tendencies arising from opposite emotions and forces,"<sup>105</sup> This suggests that Weber may have, perhaps unconsciously, accepted both the historical dialectic and cyclical notions of history.

But even if history is as chaotic as Weber claims, modern chaos theory argues that what seems to us chaotic is not in reality as chaotic as we might think. Nature has the capacity to organize and reorganize complexity and thus to make sense out of chaos.<sup>106</sup> Chaotic

developments, therefore, regardless of their nature and causes, tend to produce discernible patterns of change that lead eventually to new, more stable systems and relationships.

Theories that have a clear, deterministic conception of world history tend to condition life and determine fate, giving people little choice and limited options. The options they usually give are confined to the following:

1. Riding the tide of history by joining the forces of change;
2. Slowing down the movement of history by creating obstacles in its way; or
3. Accepting fate as determined by history and doing practically nothing besides subjecting themselves to its will.<sup>107</sup>

Religion as a deterministic theory of history is even more restrictive of choice and freedom of action. It demands that man should accept fate without question and be content; it asks its followers to have faith in God's design. All actions taken are thus a part of God's will, or of man's fate, even when one agonizes over his decisions and actions. Max Weber called this religious attitude "the height of ethical irresponsibility,"<sup>108</sup> arguing that it absolves man of ethical responsibility for his own actions.

The chaos theory of history is the only theory that gives people the opportunity to shape their own lives and destinies. But in return, it demands that they be responsible for their actions. Max Weber wrote that it was "the fate of a cultural epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge to be aware that however we may investigate history we cannot read its real meaning, and that we must be content to create our own sense of history."<sup>109</sup> **Dynamics of Change**

John Locke argued in his *Essay on Human Understanding* that reason founded on experience is the only path to understanding the world in which we live. He wrote that "experience could only be personal, never collective, and hence history was an impossibility."<sup>110</sup> Experience in life, however, is both individual and collective. Individual experience is more important to the development of one's mental capacity, reason, and basic convictions; collective experience is particularly

important to shaping attitudes, consciousness, and interests. Human beings are instinctively social and must be tied to other people through a web of relationships that are of a biological, social, political, and economic nature. Such ties, while making us human and conscious of our individual humanity, create communities and societies and hold them together. We cannot be fully human, therefore, without collective experience, and collective experience is not possible without society.

Ever since the appearance of the most primitive form of human society, some one hundred thousand years ago, people have continued to form larger societies, more intricate social and political relationships, more specialized socio-cultural and economic organizations, and more complex systems. Throughout history, people have been motivated by self-interest to preserve their race, to attain more security, physical and otherwise, to gain more freedom, and to improve life conditions in general. Collective historical experience, or human history, clearly indicates that we have achieved a great deal of what we wanted and sought. But the process through which we traveled to reach our goals has not proceeded in either a linear or a cyclical manner. It is also far from being chaotic.

History, as shall be explained later, has moved along a largely linear path, going through both cyclical and chaotic periods of change. But linear conceptions of history are mistaken in arguing that history has a destination or a final station to which it moves with diligence. In other words, neither the linear, cyclical, nor chaotic conception explains the historical process by itself; all conceptions are needed to explain it. Each is only a component of a larger theory of history, the "Locomotive Theory," that incorporates and integrates the three non-religious conceptions of history into one theory.

The dialectical method of reasoning and change developed by Hegel and advanced by Marx does not explain historical change, nor does it describe the process of change in society. The human historical experience does not give us one single case where contradictions within a society or a culture were allowed to reach the point of explosion and cause the demise of the system in its entirety. Societal change, throughout

history and in every land where it has taken place, has never been sudden or total; it has always been subtle and gradual. "Change is inescapable and the more gradual and hidden the more decisive; the great shifts in fortune for ancient empires were usually not apparent to those living at the time."<sup>111</sup>

A new idea, theme, or thesis does not always give rise to its opposite or contradiction. If it did, the entire history of thought would be a negative one whose only objective is to refute every new idea. Only big ideas or grand ideologies are likely to face the kind of opposition that could give rise to opposite ideas or ideologies intended to neutralize the new ones. In fact, the most important ideas that changed history and built the foundations of modern science, technology and economics were small ones, arising primarily from actual needs to solve real problems and exploit new opportunities. They worked in each field as a cluster of competing and cooperating forces interacting with one another and with other clusters of ideas in other fields.

Each social system, system of thought, and organization is made up of several components or forces that cooperate and compete with each other. Cooperation is what gives a system its form and enables it to exhibit stability. Competition, on the other hand, is what gives a system its sense of purpose and enables it to be more or less dynamic. Cooperation and competition together, meanwhile, give a system its structure and enable it to meet the changing needs of society in which it functions.

During the early stages of systemic formation, the forces of cooperation within a system usually prevail, which allows the system to grow normally without serious contradictions or problems. The forces of competition, whose job is to challenge those of cooperation, are weak and largely ineffective, but always alive and functional. As systems mature, the forces of cooperation usually become more conservative, less innovative and thus less able to meet the changing needs of society, and therefore less able to defend themselves against the challenges of the competing forces of change.

As the forces of cooperation are weakened, the forces of competition become stronger and more assertive, promoting the need for renewed change and development. At a certain point in the life of each system, just after the system passes the stage of maturity, it becomes rather unstable; conflict between the weakened forces of stability and the strengthened forces of change erupts and endures. If conflict is moderate, a new balance may emerge, restoring stability and allowing the system to continue to grow at a reasonable pace compatible with the needs of both forces. If conflict is severe, it could undermine the forces of stability, or suppress the forces of change.

If the forces of cooperation and stability prevail, the system loses its dynamism and begins to decline. It will eventually lose its relevance and die. But if the forces of change and competition prevail, a new system, often in the womb of the old one, is born to replace the old one under the leadership of the forces of change, giving rise to its own forces of cooperation and competition. The way conflict plays itself out in this stage may lead to a prolonged period of stagnation or to a short period of chaos.

Each idea, system, and organization has a life of its own. And just like people, animals, and plants, some systems live much longer than others and are more resistant to adverse environmental changes. In addition, the abilities of systems to defend themselves against the outside and other existential challenges vary from one system to another. This ability is a function of the structure of the system itself and the nature and weight of the outside challenges, as well as the relationship between the forces of continuity and the forces of change inside the system and in the larger society. Depending on such factors, some systems may continue to be stagnant for a long time without meaningful change before they eventually die; others may live their entire life in a state of perpetual imbalance and dynamic change.

Most of the systems that function today and manage societal life in general in the Third World are largely stable and stagnant. In contrast, most of the systems that function in societies of the First and Second Worlds are largely unstable and dynamic. Systems that are traditional

are more likely to be stagnant because life conditions are simple and change is usually governed by values that seldom change. Systems that are modern are more likely to be dynamic because life conditions are complex and social change tends to be governed by interests that change continuously. Nevertheless, all systems fade away after their productive life ends and the need to replace them becomes apparent, at times urgent. Some systems, such as capitalism, possess an incredible capacity to regenerate themselves and be responsive to changing societal needs. Most others, however, do not possess such a capacity; many are born sterile and live a largely unproductive life until their death.

Systems may on occasion neither die nor rejuvenate themselves; they may and often do give birth to new systems that live and function next to them. Such new systems are established by certain elements of the forces of cooperation that consider the breadth and depth of cooperation as being less than satisfactory, or by certain elements of the forces of competition that perceive the intensity of competition as being less than desired. The creation of new systems serves to stabilize the older systems by helping them get rid of internal challenges, while at the same time making them less important. In the process, systems are multiplied, and the larger societal system becomes more complex and dynamic and thus less vulnerable to the contradictions of one of its many systems.

### **Forces of Change**

Societies in general are large social systems having their own cooperative and competitive forces, or their particular forces of continuity and change. Each society, regardless of its size and structure, has many traditional and non-traditional systems and formal and informal organizations, all of which can be grouped into the four societal processes: the socio-cultural, political, economic, and infomedia processes. While all processes exist in each society, the role each plays differs from one society to another. In addition, while the relationship

between any two processes may be characterized as cooperative in one society, it may be characterized as competitive in another. The nature of systemic relationships and the degree of cooperation and competition between the different societal processes are what determines the nature, pace, and extent of social transformation in each society. The following is a summation of the role of these processes in influencing change and making history.

The socio-cultural process came into existence with the formation of the first human societies and continued to evolve slowly and freely, concentrating on maintaining unity and social harmony, until the emergence of the political process. The transfer of knowledge, the assignment of individual roles, and the definition of mutual obligations and norms of behavior were all informally regulated by customs and enforced by traditions, the two pillars of the culture of the time.

Late in the life of the agricultural age, organized religion appeared as a body of knowledge to explain what people had failed to explain, matters that were related to life and death, to nature and meteorology. As religion was established it became sacred, forming and controlling a system of values and beliefs at the heart of culture; it actually became the core of culture everywhere. Since traditions, customs, and religious beliefs tend to be stable over time, the agricultural society managed to change very little over thousands of years. Ideas became the primary force that could challenge the socio-cultural process from within and introduce a dose of change in the life of society. The European experience of the Renaissance proves this point. New ideas emerged slowly, challenging the conventional wisdom and its religious foundation, and weakening the socio-cultural process and its influence in society.

The political process was born in the womb of the socio-cultural process, not as a replacement for it, but as an extension of it to meet the needs of a larger agricultural society of many communities, particularly the law and order functions. Since such functions could also be performed by customs and traditions, competition and, at later times, conflict, became a characteristic of the relationship between the political process and the socio-cultural one. Competition between these two

processes on the one hand, and the expansion of trade on the other, were instrumental in introducing a modest dose of dynamism into the life of the agricultural society, causing the pace of change to accelerate slightly. Trade was followed by conquest and this, in turn, instigated political conflict and civil wars. Consequently, new conditions were created that facilitated suppression of minorities, political opposition, cultural assertiveness, cross-cultural interaction, and the rise of new challenges in the form of unconventional ideas, organizations and technologies. Nevertheless, life conditions, states of technology, cultures, and, above all, modes of production remained largely unchanged. Only when the economic process was activated and technology development was accelerated did change begin to be systematic and systemic.

The development of agriculture changed the nature of the economic system by changing the mode of production, which caused the structure of society to change as well. The greatest impact of agriculture was related not to the production of food but to social and economic organization. Agriculture changed the older tribal society, fundamentally transforming its way of life and culture. Property ownership, private and collective, taxation, distribution of goods, trade, and financial transactions later appeared as components of the economic process and indispensable activities to a properly functioning and more efficient agrarian economy. The transition from forager to farmer required so many changes in human life that the adjustment is usually called the agricultural revolution.

“The division of the world between farmers and foragers created permanent tension between two types of subsistence with very different needs.”<sup>112</sup> Because of that development, people were divided into two different societies living two civilizations, with different outlooks and largely contradictory goals. Consequently, each society saw itself and was perceived by the other as different, causing conflict to dominate their relationship. And while the forager continued to live a primitive life that knew no change, the farmer began to live a life of slow change and some progress, causing the gap between the two to widen. In fact,

“from the beginning of the division between farmer and forager, the relationship was never equal or just.”<sup>113</sup>

Agricultural communities were able to produce a surplus of food and thus free some people to engage in other, largely non-food producing activities. These activities were dictated by the growing needs of the new society and covered all aspects of societal life, causing all human societies to be transformed, some much more than others. The consequences of such transformations included:

1. The emergence of social classes, or, to put it differently and more accurately, the segmentation of society into farmers, soldiers, merchants, bureaucrats, rulers, and religious men;
2. The division of labor according to economic activity, which gave rise to merchants, craftsmen, entrepreneurs, money handlers and others;
3. The development of new technologies and products in response to the need to expand trade, raise agricultural production, and improve the quality of life and the efficiency of arms and war machines; and
4. The birth of other, non-material activities such as the arts, teaching, writing, and entertainment.

This last group of activities was instrumental in introducing the idea of freedom in human societies. These were creative activities that non-free, poor, and insecure people could not engage in as do people who have more freedom and a better quality of life. And because of their importance and visibility, these activities became trademarks, distinguishing one culture from another and, thus, subject to controversy.

By the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the pace of change in Europe began to accelerate and the impact of change became profound. After some 300 years of transition, the Industrial Revolution occurred, first in England and later on in other Western European countries and in North America. During that transitional period, which was led by the economic process, both the socio-cultural and political processes endured great, often painful change. The change, however, was neither quick nor peaceful; it was painful and chaotic, causing conflict, wars,

loss of identity, and loss of direction. Describing the scene as Germany was knocking at the gate of the Industrial Revolution, Hegel said, "All the mass of previous representations, concepts, and bonds linking our world together are dissolving and collapsing like a dream picture."<sup>114</sup> A chaotic conception of the history of that period would have been very appropriate indeed.

The Industrial Revolution, which was carried out by the economic process, could not have happened without the profound changes and trials and tribulations of the transitional period. Societies that went through that period had to witness the transformations of their value systems, their social and political structures, and even their sense of identity and mission. Countries that did not experience such transformations, such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, the Philippines and most Latin American countries, were and still are unable to live the Industrial Revolution and enter the industrial age. The socio-cultural and political forces of continuity and stability in those countries were able to meet the challenges posed by the social forces of change and transformation.

While cooperation has always characterized the relationship between science and technology on the one hand and the economic process on the other, conflict has almost always characterized the relationship between the socio-cultural and economic processes. Because of that conflict, the progress of economics, science, and technology has come at the expense of traditions, customs, and magical and mythical convictions. Wherever science, technology, and industry advanced, traditional social relationships and attitudes, and belief systems were vastly weakened and forced to endure drastic change. And wherever traditions, traditional values, religious belief systems, and conventional ways of thinking were able to retain their role and sustain their influence in society, science and technology as well as economics were unable to achieve adequate progress.

The need to expand trade and facilitate and legitimize financial transactions and institutions during the transitional period could not be met without the support of the state. Because of that need, the economic process forged a cooperative relationship with the political one,

while its relationship with the socio-cultural process grew more competitive and conflictual. This cooperative relationship between the political and economic processes was also dictated by the need of the rulers for the financial support of the merchants. Yet as the economic process expanded and grew richer, it became more powerful and began to exert increasing influence over the political process. By the middle of the twentieth century, the economic process had emerged in the industrialized countries as the most powerful and influential societal process, forcing the other two processes to adopt defensive postures.

The infomedia process, unlike other societal processes, was the product of scientific research and technology development, which are activities that the economic process supports and partially finances. And since science and technology are themselves products of a universal effort throughout history that serve the interests of business as well as society, the infomedia process was born as a universal process with close ties to the economic one. It is, therefore, able to reach and influence every person in each corner of the globe, regardless of race, color, culture, nationality, and geographical location.

In the late 1980s, the most advanced industrial societies began to enter a new transitional period, with its confusion, crises, and loss of direction. History, as a result, began to move again in a chaotic manner and lose its logic; it could no longer help society understand the nature of change or define its direction.

The first transitional period from the age of the hunter and gatherer to the age of agriculture lasted about 3,000 years. The second transitional period between the agricultural and industrial ages lasted about 300 years. The newest transitional period from the industrial to the knowledge age is expected to last about 30 years. This seems to indicate that each transitional period between successive civilizations lasts about 10% of the preceding one. If this conclusion could be used as a general rule, then the age of knowledge, which is expected to become the most imposing fact of life around the year 2020, will become an age in transition, or an age of perpetual change and transformation.

Successive revolutions in the totality of the human experience would occur continuously and almost simultaneously.

One might correctly argue that all societal processes were born at the same time when the first human society was formed. While no society could be formed without a system to obtain food, no society could be held together for long without a value system and a system of authority. In addition, no society could function as a society without a language that enables its members to communicate with one another. But there is no doubt also that one of the four societal processes has always played the lead role during each stage of every society's development, and that that role has always been taken away from it by another process at a later stage.

In other words, the historical process has always been led by one societal process, not by a culture or a nation or a leader, with the socio-cultural process being the first to lead. It provided and continues to provide the glue that holds members of each society together. When the political process was developed and activated, its union with the socio-cultural process led initially to strengthening the socio-cultural forces; but slowly and gradually socio-cultural forces were subordinated to the authority and rationale of politics. And when the economic process was developed and activated, its union with the political process led initially to strengthening the political forces, but slowly and gradually the political forces were subordinated to the power and rationale of economics. Today, the infomedia process is cooperating more and competing less with the economic process. But if current merger trends continue and the commercializing of the media intensifies, the economic and infomedia processes could merge together to form a powerful societal process beyond challenge.

If the level and type of industrial and military technology were to remain constant, which was largely true throughout the pre-industrial age, conflict and change would be a zero-sum game, and history would be rather cyclical, moving in place but very little in time. But if conflict and change were to produce too many winners and too many losers, and if a winner in one respect could be at the same time a loser

in another, history would be chaotic, moving in place, in time, and in all other directions simultaneously. But if the number of winners produced by change were to be large and on the rise, and if continued change were to give the losers an opportunity to become future winners, history would be linear, moving much in place but more in time.

### **The Locomotive Theory of History**

Throughout pre-agricultural and agricultural times, the state of technology was largely primitive and more or less the same everywhere. Ideas, belief systems, leadership qualities, and the collective will to fight, not arms or technology, were the decisive factors that enabled the few to distinguish themselves from the many. Tribal societies, although inferior economically to the agricultural ones, were always able to have undisputed leadership and possess a stronger will to fight than the scattered, loosely connected agricultural communities. Because of that quality of leadership and collective will to fight, tribal societies had more of the decisive elements of power of the time and, consequently, were almost always successful in war against their agricultural neighbors.

The strength of the socio-cultural process, and the clarity of authority in society explain the success of the tribes in their wars against the richer, more secure agricultural societies. They explain the stunning success of the Arabs under Islam in their wars against the more advanced, stronger, and larger Persian and Roman empires in the seventh century. They also explain the success of the nomadic barbarians in Europe against European states in the pre-industrial times. But despite their success, however, no victorious tribal society was able to replace an agricultural one, and no defeated agricultural society was forced to regress back into tribalism.

A tribesman, generally speaking, is a person who fights to live and lives to fight. An agricultural man, on the other hand, is generally a person who eats to live and lives to eat. An industrial man, in contrast, is a person who works to live and lives to work. For the first, the purpose of life starts and ends with fighting; for the second, it starts and

ends with eating; and for the last, it starts and ends with working. As for the knowledge man, he is expected to live to learn and learn to live, making knowledge the principal purpose of life.

The formation of the state system involved, in addition to culture, other important elements of power, including political ideas and armies, ideology, and leadership qualities and ambitions. Because of this multiplicity of the elements of power, many states were able to gain substantial power at different times, build empires, and dominate other, less powerful peoples, only to be weakened and defeated later. History, under the leadership of the political process in pre-industrial times, was therefore forced to behave in a largely, but not entirely, cyclical manner, allowing new powers to emerge as others declined.

The formation of the modern nation state in the industrial age involved even more elements of power; it involved advanced military power, science, technology, and economic power. Fewer states, consequently, were able to gain enough power to distinguish themselves and project influence beyond their borders and, thus, attain international prominence. History, particularly in light of the cumulative nature of the new elements of power, was forced to abandon its cyclical behavior and move in a rather linear fashion. And this in turn caused the relationship between the agricultural society and the industrial society to become unequal and unjust. No agricultural society was able to defeat and replace an industrial one, and no defeated industrial society was forced to regress back to the agricultural age.

The socio-cultural and political processes are largely responsible for change within civilizational lines, or change that is more in place than in time. On the other hand, the economic and infomedia processes, with their technological components, are largely responsible for change across civilizational lines, or change that is primarily in time, not in place. While a movement in place leaves peoples and their cultures largely unchanged, living in the same civilization, a movement in time causes peoples and their cultures to move to higher civilizations, fundamentally transforming their life conditions and ways of life.

In poor, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and largely agricultural societies, the socio-cultural process is largely communal and particular, not national. It works to deepen ethnic and cultural differences in society and create frictions that can lead to conflict or civil war. In more developed, industrialized and rather homogeneous societies, the socio-cultural process is more national, and thus plays a unifying rather than a divisive role. The political process is strong and able to focus more on national and regional issues and forge a cooperative relationship with the economic process, enabling the latter to function as a regional process, supported and protected by the state. In more developed, largely knowledge-based and democratic societies, the political process tends to be fragmented, and that allows the economic process to have more freedom and become truly international, integrating the national economy into the global one. The infomedia process, meanwhile, becomes more active, assuming certain important functions of the socio-cultural and political processes. And while expanding globally to help the economic process internationalize, the infomedia process tends to synthesize the cultures of the knowledge people around the world, helping them to form a global culture.

Most tribal and traditional societies of the Third World fit the first model; the socio-cultural process is busy creating and fighting internal conflicts. The political process is rather weak and largely paralyzed, the economic process is still in its childhood, and the infomedia process is in its infancy, being cared for and shaped by a manipulative political process.

Most industrializing and largely industrialized societies fit the second model; the socio-cultural process is busy promoting and defending the national culture. The political process is strong and in control, defining and defending the national interest; the economic process is maturing and gaining more power; and the infomedia process is growing fast and fighting to free itself from the hegemony of the political process.

Mature industrial and post-industrial societies fit the third model; the socio-cultural process is weak and busy reviving older cultures

and developing them into viable subcultures. The political process is getting weaker and losing focus, the economic process is mature and in control of its destiny, and the infomedia process is free, influential and fast gaining power, assisted by and allied with the economic process.

When the socio-cultural process dominated life in tribal and early agricultural times, it represented the locomotive that drove the historical process and influenced its direction. When and where the political process, represented by the state, dominated life in society, particularly in maturing agricultural and early industrial societies, it replaced the socio-cultural one, assuming its role in instigating social change and influencing its pace and direction. But as it moved forward, the political process pulled the less dynamic societies behind its wagon. Where the economic process dominates life in society, particularly in mature industrial and post-industrial societies, it serves as a locomotive, driving the historical process and influencing its pace and direction, while pulling the less developed societies behind.

The dominant process in society always overshadows or subordinates the other processes, forcing them to accommodate themselves to its rationale. Today, the infomedia process is fast becoming dominant in the post-industrial societies. And because this process was born as an international process, the people or the elite most involved in its activities are fast becoming dominant both as a global cultural group and as a socioeconomic class within national borders.

The society or state where the dominant societal process is also the most developed in the world, assumes global leadership, forcing other societies to follow its lead and accommodate themselves to its interests, cultural values, and lifestyles. For example, when the economic process was most developed and dynamic in England in the nineteenth century, England was able to lead the world and dominate many parts of it. And since the economic and infomedia processes in the United States are today most developed and dynamic, the U.S. is able to foster its world leadership and strengthen its economic and military dominance.

Being the locomotive of history, the most developed process or society pulls the other, less developed processes and societies along the path it travels. In other words, it helps other societies change and reach higher levels of civilization, always showing them an image of their own future. No societal process, however, has been able to establish itself and attain power without first forging a cooperative relationship with the preceding process. On the other hand, no process has been able to continue to develop and make further progress without freeing itself from the cooperative relationship it had previously forged. Because of this fact, cooperation has always been replaced by competition, leading to more dynamism and change. Cooperation, no matter how strong it is and how long it may last, is more of a transitional aspect, while competition is more of a permanent aspect of process relationships.

The conception of history presented in this chapter views the historical process as a locomotive, pulling behind it a number of civilizational wagons; it moves forward, accelerates gradually and slows down when forced to by obstacles it encounters. It, however, never stops completely nor retreats permanently. But just like every other locomotive, it starts its engine and leaves it running for some time before moving, which causes the locomotive to move in place for a while before starting to move in time.

The socio-cultural process was the historical locomotive, or the engine of the historical process, in the pre-agricultural and early agricultural times. It caused those societies to move very slowly in place while making no noticeable movement in time. The political process gave history a more efficient engine suited for an agricultural society of many communities. It caused the agricultural society to move both in place and in time, with the latter movement being less noticeable.

The economic process gave the historical process an even more efficient engine, enabling it to increase its speed and be more focused. The new societies driven by this process are, as a result, able to move continuously and rapidly in place and in time simultaneously, with the latter movement being more pronounced, causing progress to

become systematic and cumulative. Now the locomotive of the industrial society is forced, as it moves forward, to pull the agricultural civilizational wagon and thus help its societies increase the pace of their movement in time.

As we begin the twenty-first century, the infomedia process is fast becoming the new engine of the historical process. It represents a more sophisticated and efficient engine that only the few can drive and fully utilize. And while it drives the knowledge locomotive and its knowledge society, it pulls all other civilizational wagons forward, enabling them to move faster and more in time than in place. Inside the knowledge wagon, people seem to be moving exclusively in time rather than in place, creating an unprecedented dynamism. Because of that dynamism, the knowledge wagon has become more like an open space in which the knowledge elite drives at full speed in all directions, believing that there are no restrictions or limits in sight to their ambitions.

As explained earlier, the transformation from the pre-agricultural to the agricultural state of living passed through a difficult transitional period, causing societies to move in place and in time simultaneously without coordination. And since transitional periods are times of chaotic change, the historical process experienced a discontinuity that caused it to lose its sense of direction while history lost its logic. The transitional period thus became a time chain tying the historical wagon of the more developed civilization and its society to the less developed ones. The transformation from the agricultural civilization to the industrial one also had to pass through a difficult transitional period, during which the historical process experienced a discontinuity and history lost its logic.

Inside each civilizational wagon, the movement of the historical process is more or less cyclical, particularly inside the pre-agricultural and agricultural wagons. During transitional periods that tie two civilizations together, the movement of the historical process is primarily chaotic. But overall, viewed from a wide historical perspective, the movement of human history has definitely been linear. And with every historical engine, the new civilizational wagon got smaller, and

the preceding one got larger, as more people learned from the new civilization and its accomplishments, causing the last wagon to shrink further. And that clearly signifies progress over time.

After so many centuries of human progress, the cumulative change that the historical process has accomplished looks today like a plastic spring based in sand. While no one can see its base, know how deep it is, and understand how it started with certainty, everyone can see it pointing upward. The optimists, whose conception of history is linear, are more likely to focus on the spring's head and appreciate its upward-looking trend. The pessimists, whose conception of history is cyclical, are almost certain to focus on its bottom and appreciate the appearance of its downward movement. Others, whose conception of history is rather chaotic, are more likely to see in its chain an upward-downward trend that signifies a motionless, meaningless movement. Yet the true view is the one that can see how the three conceptions coexist, and appreciate the interlocking relationships they forge with one another to make history and move it forward.

## Chapter Six

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### Economy and Society

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The existence of an economy is essential to the formation and survival of society. No society could survive without an economy efficient enough to meet, at the very least, the basic needs of its members. Every economy, in fact, exists for the sole purpose of meeting the growing needs and sustaining the changing life conditions of society. The economy, therefore, is a component of society; and society is the framework within which the economy functions and from which it derives its meaning and purpose. Because of that relationship, every society has its own economy, and every economy reflects the attributes of the particular culture and civilization of society.

An economy embodies institutions, arrangements, goals, relationships, and activities that cannot exist or function without people. People, at the same time, cannot survive and find real meaning in life without being involved in the activities of their economy. As a result, people's needs, values, attitudes, interests, and relationships, or simply their culture, affects the way their economy is organized, the goals it seeks to accomplish, the functions it performs, and the relationships it creates and supports. On the other hand, people's involvement in their economy makes them dependent on its performance and subject to its influence and the changes it normally experiences. This dependence causes people's needs, values, attitudes, interests and relationships, or

their culture, to change accordingly. In other words, the relationship between culture and economy is a dynamic one whereby each affects the other and is affected by it.

A society is an entity comprised of individuals, groups, relationships, traditions, goals, and organizations seeking to stay together and improve their life conditions. An economy, on the other hand, is a space within which certain components of society interact with each other and with their environment to improve the quality of life. No social relationship is formed and sustained without an economic aspect, and no economic relationship is formed and sustained without a social base. As culture works to tie people together and help them form a society, economic interests work to reorganize people and create new ties to make them interdependent. Every society tends to create an economy that corresponds to its culture without disturbing its basic values and relationships. Every economy, meanwhile, tends to remold people's cultures to correspond to its material goals.

Culture is the organizing principle of the social aspects of life in society; economy is the organizing principle of the material aspects of life in society. Since neither aspect can be meaningful without the other, both are needed to form and sustain communal life and give it its characteristics. Therefore, culture and economic organization are society's heart and mind. No society can come into existence without either one, and neither could survive on its own without the other.

In the early stages of human development, people were gatherers of fruits and plants and hunters of animals. Their economy, as a result, was more of a personal rather than a communal one; it lacked institutions, social activities, and a division of labor. Yet "foraging has been the most generalized and enduring subsistence pattern developed by humans. It is the only strategy proven viable over tens of thousands of years."<sup>115</sup> Nonetheless, it was a primitive strategy dictated by an instinct to survive in an inhospitable environment, rather than a conscious desire to make progress or accumulate wealth. People, consequently, remained subject to the whims and cruelties of nature for countless generations.

Agriculture was a new pattern of subsistence that people discovered and utilized to transform their life conditions. It was a revolutionary development that gradually led to the emergence of a new, more efficient economy and a different society. The changes instigated by the agricultural revolution included changing the pattern of economic subsistence, economic organization, human relationships, social structure and organization, and individual as well as collective values and attitudes. "The change from hunting and gathering involved more than a mere change in the subsistence pattern; it represented a complete change in the social and cultural fabric of life."<sup>116</sup> The new pattern, while enhancing people's ability to survive and communities' ability to grow, established new traditions and a new way of life. It was and to some extent still is a way of life characterized by simplicity and rigidity, allowing agricultural societies to change very little over thousands of years.

The Industrial Revolution caused all industrial societies to experience a new wave of economic change that led, within a century, to the transformation of the totality of life conditions in those societies. New economic arrangements evolved where capital was separated from labor, and where fairly large economic organizations emerged, employing machines and groups of workers under one roof. These new production arrangements instituted new relationships between people and machines, capital and labor, one worker and another, and urban and rural communities. The new economic system that emerged from this process is what we call capitalism. Capitalism, writes Robert Heilbroner, "is unique in generating persistent and powerful tendencies to change."<sup>117</sup>

The Industrial Revolution, as explained earlier, has demonstrated that fundamental change in the economic way of life is destined to change profoundly the socio-cultural and political aspects of life. But for an industrial revolution to take place in any society, the socio-cultural context has to change first to become more conducive to economic change. Cultural attitudes and social relationships influence economic organization and relationships as much as economic organization and

relationships influence cultural attitudes and social relationships. The experience of Third World nations in general has demonstrated that economic change introduced by the state cannot be sustained and become productive while efforts are being made to preserve the traditional value systems and ways of life. In nations such as Japan and Singapore, where the socio-cultural context was the first to be transformed through well-conceived governmental strategies, economic change was not only possible but also remarkably successful.

The record of human development from hunting and gathering to agriculture and from agriculture to industry testifies to the importance of the economic factor in societal change in general and socio-cultural transformation in particular. In contrast, the experience of Japan and the so-called Asian Tigers of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan seems to indicate that socio-cultural change is capable of causing equally significant economic changes. This experience has proven that desired socio-cultural change does not have to wait for economic change to take the lead, and that genuine economic change may not be possible without a socio-cultural environment conducive to such a development.

The old and the new experiences thus seem to indicate that desired change in society may be initiated at either the economic level or the socio-cultural level. However, if the economic process is the one chosen to lead change and development in society, it must be allowed to influence the socio-cultural environment without interference from either the state or the traditional forces of society. Traditional values and rigid social attitudes rooted in previous civilizations must neither be protected nor permitted to hamper economic change and social transformation. Otherwise, much desired and often badly needed economic change will be limited, temporary, and incapable of affecting most facets of the economic life.

On the other hand, if the socio-cultural process is the one chosen to lead change and development, state intervention, as the Japanese experience demonstrated, will be needed. The state should intervene to conceive the desired socio-cultural change, plan for it, and supervise

the implementation of whatever programs are required to effect change. Such plans and programs should be directed and coordinated to create new socio-cultural, political, and legal environments conducive to investment and economic change.

“There is a mistaken tendency, encouraged by contemporary economic discourse, to regard the economy as a facet of life with its own laws, separate from the rest of society. But in any modern society, the economy constitutes one of the fundamental and dynamic areas of human sociability.”<sup>118</sup> The other fundamentally important, but less dynamic, facet is the socio-cultural aspect, whose interaction with the economic facet determines the fate and pace of development and the direction of social transformation. In fact, no profound economic and technological change is possible without genuine socio-cultural change, and no socio-cultural change is meaningful without economic and technological progress.

Recognition of the increasing importance of materialism in human life has led most serious historians to consider the economic factor as a major force in history. Some philosophers, Karl Marx in particular, could not see any other factor. Although the collapse of communism at the end of the 1980s undermined the logic of Marxism and weakened belief in material determinism, fascination with determinism has lately led some writers and political philosophers to espouse cultural determinism. Ideological simplicity makes analysis easy, conclusions predetermined, and judgment final. Such theories, however, tend to ignore the importance of the economic factor in human life and to portray culture as a rigid value system and a mind-set incapable of genuine change. They also view reality only through enmity, us against them, or, as Samuel Huntington puts it, “the West against the rest.”

### **Managing the Economic Problem**

The economic problem, which deals with the allocation of available resources and involves the production and distribution of goods and services in society, was discovered thousands of years ago. And since

its discovery, it has led human societies to organize their individual efforts and group activities to deal with it as efficiently as possible. As societies advanced and populations multiplied, the methods of economic management improved and became more sophisticated, while the economic problem got more complicated. By the time the Industrial Revolution reached maturity, people had lost control over the economic problem, leaving the management of most of its facets to the invisible forces of a free market economy.

Development precipitated by the Industrial Revolution caused manufacturing to spread rapidly and the number of suppliers, workers, financiers, and entrepreneurs to multiply, and that, in turn, caused traditional and state control over the economy to be greatly weakened. But in spite of the loss of state control, the economy kept functioning, production kept increasing, and the efficiency of both the allocation of available resources and the distribution of end products steadily improved. Consequently, it was concluded that the market has an “invisible hand” that guides its operations, and that the logic of a free market economy may be superior to that of any other economic management system. However, “one thing that is clearly not maximized by free markets is equality.”<sup>119</sup>

On the way to a freely functioning market system, societies used two other economic systems to manage their economic problem—tradition and command. Tradition was, and to some extent still is, the primary economic system used by traditional agricultural societies, which rely heavily on customs and older ways of thinking to keep society functioning, cohesive, and content. Because of this reliance on tradition, the economic problem is kept under control, the methods to manage it are simple, and life in general is less complicated and thus less developed. Alongside tradition the command and market systems play minor roles in agricultural societies, particularly in supporting feudalism and promoting trade, respectively.

Command was, and to a great extent still is, the major economic system used by socialist societies and some Third World nations to manage their economic problem. These societies rely heavily on central

planning to determine what to produce, how to allocate available resources, and how to distribute products and services in society. The nature and extent of the economic problem, as a result, are determined in advance, and the end results are defined beforehand, making the system rigid, unable to deal with surprises, and thus largely incapable of adapting to changed circumstances. Nonetheless, the increasing complexity of economic life on the one hand, and the need to trade with other nations on the other allow the forces of tradition and a free market economy to play minor roles, providing the command system with a sense of direction and some sensitivity.

At the end of the 1980s, communism collapsed and the Soviet Union gradually disintegrated, signaling the bankruptcy of Marxism and the failure of the socialist command system and thus central economic planning. This development allowed the proponents of the free market system to declare victory and convince most other nations to follow their lead. "This triumph has inaugurated—for the first time in the history of humankind—the reign of a single, acceptable way of viewing things in the area of economics, which is considered by its proponents as being universally valid, in both its premises and applications."<sup>120</sup> Harvey Cox sees the free market through the eyes of its promoters as a god; he says, "The market is becoming...the only true God, whose reign must now be universally accepted and who allows for no rivals."<sup>121</sup>

In societies where traditions and religious beliefs are strong, authority is hierarchical, and that makes it easy for the command system to prevail and even to produce tangible results, at least in the short run. In contrast, where society is open and hierarchical authority is weak, the introduction of the command system usually encounters stiff resistance and ultimately fails. Price controls introduced in the United States by the Nixon administration in the wake of the oil shock of 1973, for example, were unpopular and unhelpful; they had to be abandoned before they could even be seriously tested.

A free market economy can function efficiently only in free societies where state intervention is limited and intended only to guarantee the

proper functioning of the economy. States in free societies usually intervene in economic life to regulate monopolies, prevent exploitation, provide equal opportunity, protect the environment, discourage socially undesired activities, and encourage other activities that are socially desirable but not financially rewarding. Since such intervention is usually limited to certain economic activities only, values become subject to powerful materialistic forces that tend to deform certain aspects of older cultures.

Joseph Schumpeter argued more than half a century ago that the most damaging consequence of capitalism is the negative effect it has on the values that support the social order in society.<sup>122</sup> But what Schumpeter seems to have failed to see is that cultures have a tendency to adapt, and that values have the capacity to transform themselves to accommodate economic change. Values that supported the then-existing social order did not disintegrate and the social order they supported did not collapse; new values emerged slowly and a new social order formed gradually, creating new, very different, and yet largely compatible socio-cultural and economic relationships.

In societies such as Japan and the other Asian tigers, where authority is largely hierarchical and traditions are observed and respected, a limited version of the command system was introduced and proved able to perform. However, it was not intended to control the allocation of available resources or the distribution of end products. Rather, it was largely intended to protect labor and guarantee that production proceeded in accordance with standards that met international requirements. Command also was meant to provide important industries with state support and protection to survive and become competitive in a fast-emerging global economy. But as the economies of those nations advanced and diversified, government control loosened, and both producers and consumers demanded and received more freedom of choice. All this suggests that a free market economy needs a free society, and that a free society cannot be truly free without a free market economy. Consequently, only free societies with free market

economies can compete and be successful in this age. "If markets do not operate well, neither will the economy."<sup>123</sup>

Society and economy are tied to each other by a cause and effect relationship. Each major action taken by either one, and each substantial change experienced by it, will destabilize the relationship, forcing the other to react to restore balance. But such a reaction is in itself a new action taken by the other side that induces the first one to react in a similar manner. Because of such dynamics, the relationship between economy and society continues to change and languish in a state of imbalance. This makes the free market economy both an economic system to manage the economic problem and a powerful force of socio-cultural transformation. Capitalism "has taken the form of waves of invention that have altered not only the productive capabilities of society but its social composition, even its relationship to nature itself," wrote Robert Heilbroner.<sup>124</sup>

The dynamic nature of capitalism on the one hand, and the often difficult socio-cultural changes needed to deal efficiently with the emerging economy on the other have caused societies to be divided into different socioeconomic classes. While classical economic and political thinking have defined such classes on the basis of income only, differences among classes since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution have reflected income disparities and, to a lesser extent, socio-cultural gaps as well.

Adam Smith, who was the first philosopher to understand the dynamics of an industrial economy and its social implications, was also the first to observe that economic progress brings with it not only wealth but also income inequality. But this consequence was defended and justified, because without it wealth would lose its true meaning, and the incentive for hard work would disappear. If, for example, the wealth of a nation were to be evenly divided among its members, hardly anyone would be tempted to work for another person, and contentment rather than unfulfilled expectations would govern both economic and socio-cultural conditions, making change slow and

uninspiring. In other words, total equality of income would retard economic progress and hinder socio-cultural transformation.

In the new age of post-industrialism, knowledge has become a major resource whose wealth-generating potential exceeds the combined potential of natural resources and capital. This new development has aggravated problems of both income inequality and socio-cultural disparity. " During this period of increasing income inequality the value of a four-year college degree has dramatically increased. Those with one have continued to move ahead; those without one have fallen further behind."<sup>125</sup>

People without the right knowledge are unable to find well-paying jobs, and most of those without good sources of income are generally unable to get good education. Thus, poverty nurtures ignorance and ignorance feeds poverty, while wealth and knowledge reinforce one another, enabling the people of knowledge to increase their wealth and the wealthy to gain more knowledge. Meanwhile, "the technological revolution of the past few decades—which has made knowledge an essential raw material for employment in new industries and has partially freed industry from its dependence on basic commodities—has brought about a twin movement toward social polarization and marginalization of disadvantaged individuals."<sup>126</sup>

People, working and living together in society, seek satisfaction and recognition through their relationships with other people. Satisfaction and recognition are normally obtainable in traditional societies through the cultivation of land, the worship of gods, the raising of children, and the serving of ideologies and ideological leaders. In the new age, however, money alone seems to have become the means to obtain both material satisfaction and socio-political recognition. But money can only be legitimately obtained through gainful employment and, to a lesser extent, through inheritance. People lacking the skills to gain and hold rewarding jobs are unable to have money and, consequently, to gain the satisfaction and recognition they need and deserve. "Unemployment not only deprives one of an income but also of his

status in society. He is thus denied all social existence, which in most societies is directly linked to the holding of a job."<sup>127</sup>

Knowledge, therefore, has become the primary means to gainful employment and a major source of satisfaction and recognition, and thus the key to living a rewarding and dignified life. Nevertheless, the positive role of knowledge as far as the individual and the economy are concerned usually translates into less social cohesion and more socioeconomic disparity, because it tends to empower the people of knowledge and thus to undermine hierarchical social structures. Thus, any society's choice of social cohesion, cultural integrity and socioeconomic equality can only be achieved at the expense of knowledge, freedom, economic progress, and socio-cultural transformation.

While social polarization is a cause of socio-political problems, socioeconomic marginalization is a cause of radicalism and conflict that often encourage crime. Furthermore, and particularly in the Third World, globalization, coupled with political polarization and socioeconomic marginalization, has weakened the nation-state; it has reduced its ability to control its own economy and meet the needs of its citizens and thus to prevent the widening of the socioeconomic and socio-cultural gaps in society.

George Soros recently wrote, "The capacity of the state to look after the welfare of its citizens has been severely impaired by the globalization of the capitalist system, which allows capital to escape taxation much more easily than labor can." He argued further that such a development carries with it the seeds of social conflict.<sup>128</sup> While social conflict is possible, the most likely outcome in many societies is the segmentation of national societies into competing socio-cultural groups. Such segmentation undermines both the shared cultural values and the mutual interests that hold societies together and, consequently, it makes desired national change more difficult to conceive and much harder to implement.

## Economic Globalization

An expanding free market system, cheaper and more efficient transportation systems, and easier, much faster and more reliable communications systems have caused national economies to be linked to each other, forming a global economy. Meanwhile, the internationalization of the major financial and investment markets has made economic globalization a dynamic, self-sustaining, ever-expanding process that recognizes no political borders or national sovereignties. In the process, globalization has enabled regions within national borders to move in different directions at different speeds according to their particular abilities to exploit available resources and historic connections.

As a result, the economic links that used to tie regions within nation-states together have begun to weaken, and those that link them to selected foreign markets and regions gradually to strengthen. In addition, the circumstances that have enabled regions to move at different speeds are causing income, knowledge, socio-cultural, and socioeconomic gaps to widen. And this, in turn, is weakening the desire to cooperate for the sake of the national interest and the maintenance of a common good. As Robert Kaplan says: "The traditional social contract that binds all citizens to the common good is gradually becoming an impediment to participation in the emerging global economy."<sup>129</sup>

Economic change affects societies wherever it takes place. A changing global economy affects the world society, forcing it to experience socio-cultural, socioeconomic and political change. Some of the current manifestations of such change are reflected today in the promotion of human rights, in calls for the protection of the environment and the middle class, in population control, and in the promotion of the principles of democracy and a free market economy. When global economic change moves at a fast pace, as it has been doing since World War II, it causes economic and technological progress to be unevenly divided among states, regions, and even among groups within each state. Only those states, regions, and groups that have the necessary knowledge, the right cultural attitudes, the proper legal and political frameworks,

and a solid social and physical infrastructure are able to reap the full benefits of globalization.

Globalization is an evolving state of world affairs that has its particular infrastructure, superstructure, institutions and rationale. Its infrastructure is the telecommunications and information networks; its superstructure is the international laws and treaties, particularly those governing the creation and management of economic communities and free trade zones; and its major institutions are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. And as it evolves, it produces winners and losers among individuals, groups and nations. The globalization of the world economy has forced upon the world community industrial specialization and an international division of labor. Corporations, labor (particularly knowledge labor) and capital are fast losing their cultural and political identities. The free movement of capital, particularly investment capital, and new ideas and technologies are enabling the few to reap the benefits of globalization, while causing the many to feel the frustration and pressure of change without much benefit. Globalization, therefore, has its benefits and drawbacks, both of which are forces of change and causes of conflict.

The winners tend to have a clear international outlook and to be more interested in the emerging global economy and its culture and, as such, tend to have little interest in political power; and whatever interest in political power they may have is likely to be limited to its use as a tool to manipulate others, not to dominate them. The losers, in contrast, are interested in political power to reverse the historical process and undo the consequences of globalization. These individuals and groups tend to have communal and/or national worldviews rooted in outdated ideologies.

In the age of agriculture, particularly toward its end, commerce internationalized products; they were increasingly able to travel freely across national borders. The age of industry, while reinforcing the old trend, internationalized capital, enabling it to seek investment opportunities wherever they existed. The fast-emerging age of knowledge is

not only reinforcing older trends; it also is internationalizing technology, information, talent and culture and thus causes all traditional ties and identities to be weakened.

George Soros, who is critical of the current trends, says, "The benefits of the present global capitalist system can be sustained only by deliberate and persistent efforts to correct and contain the system's deficiencies."<sup>130</sup> He groups the deficiencies under five main headings:

- The uneven distribution of benefits among nations and other socioeconomic classes and cultural groups;
- The instability of the international financial system and the risks it takes as it reacts to opportunities and crises;
- The incipient threat of global monopolies and oligopolies that limit competition;
- The ambiguous role of the state, which is increasingly being pressured to help the losers at the same time that its ability to do so is on the decline; and
- The question of values and social cohesion that are being undermined by the forces of the capitalist market.<sup>131</sup>

Adam Smith remarked more than two centuries ago that the division of labor is limited by the extent of the market. Thus, the expansion of the capitalist market to include all states has caused an international division of labor that reflects the comparative advantages of its participants. In fact, the Internet has created a totally new labor market, making competition an activity that knows no borders and respects no national sovereignty. In addition, "E-Commerce is creating a new and distinct boom, rapidly changing the economy, society, and politics."<sup>132</sup> Large corporations, for example, are creating new corporate cultures that are different from the national cultures of the countries in which they operate. New communities and associations based on shared values, such as human rights, are being formed across political lines, and new socioeconomic groups are emerging on the basis of mutual interests across cultural lines.

Societies and regions belonging to the "First World" of knowledge have economies that are rich, very dynamic and increasingly high-tech

and service-oriented. Societies and regions belonging to the “Second World” of industry have economies that are somewhat rich, largely dynamic and increasingly manufacture-based. Societies and regions belonging to the “Third World” of the pre-industrial age have economies that are mostly agricultural, traditional, largely poor, and lacking in dynamism. It is clear, therefore, that the state of the economy in society and the degree of its dynamism shape society’s culture and determine its standard of living and place in the world, and not the other way around.

Regions and socio-cultural groups within each state tend to change at different speeds and to make progress according to the potentialities of their human and non-human resources. Because of these differences, almost all societies are increasingly divided into sub-societies living in different civilizations and having dissimilar cultures. The American society, for example, is increasingly divided into three sub-societies: a small but growing sub-society that belongs to the First World of knowledge; a large but shrinking sub-society that belongs to the Second World of industry; and a third, much smaller and largely stagnant, sub-society that belongs to the Third World of agriculture. China, on the other hand, is increasingly becoming a dual society where people are divided into industrial and agricultural regions belonging to the Second and Third Worlds, respectively.

People living in the First World of knowledge tend to be individualistic and materially oriented, and the economy where they function and excel is dominated by a service sector that is based on advanced knowledge and caters to the world at large. People living in the Second World of industry tend to be nationalistic and communal, allowing ideology to influence their attitudes and thinking. Politics and the nation-state play an important role in their lives; they provide and largely define the framework within which economics function. As a result, politics and economics are forced to cooperate to shape national strategies and to compete to gain the upper hand in society. And this, in turn, allows economics to use its wealth to gain more

political influence and permits politics to employ its power to gain more wealth.

People living in the Third World of agriculture tend to be traditional and religious, allowing religious ideology and ethnicity to shape their attitudes and worldviews and to define their social relationships. Politics, particularly local politics, is hierarchical and plays a very important role in their lives, providing and defining the frameworks of social and economic relationships and activities. As a result, politics dominates economics, and political power is used to control economics and employ it to serve and foster the ideological superstructure of society. The politics of unity is preached, social and cultural conformity is imposed and perpetuated, and personal initiatives and freedoms are discouraged, sometimes suppressed outright.

Wherever and whenever economics is free of political control, both society and economy tend to be dynamic, amenable to change, and universalistic in their outlook. And wherever and whenever economics is constrained and controlled by politics and ideology, both society and economy tend to be traditional and conservative, allowing ethnicity, racial distinctions, and religious and ideological differences to greatly influence economic activities and relationships. Economic structures and production relations, therefore, reflect the degree and nature of cultural sophistication, social attitudes, education, science and technology, political organization, and environmental settings.

Although economic structures and relations of production tend to determine the quality of life in society, such structures and relations are largely a function of both culture and technology. "The rich are never rich enough...to have enough is simply to be content with what you have rather than to have what you want. When wanting comes first, you can never have enough. If contentment is placed first, it does not matter how much you have."<sup>133</sup> Culture, therefore, sets the priorities and leaves the burden of achieving them to economics, which in turn forces culture to rethink its priorities and restructure its values and attitudes.

Wherever a materialistic culture of money prevails, life is dynamic and more free, but not necessarily fair or respectful of morality; wealth generating is a self-sustaining and self-fulfilling process that cares little about non-materialistic goals and causes. Wherever a nationalistic culture prevails, life dynamics are self-centered and progress is seen more in political and cultural terms than in economic ones. And wherever culture is value-oriented and faith-based, people are placed, often comfortably and with contentment, on a downward moving escalator, while their neighbors and competitors are either holding their positions or walking upward.

### **Economic Theories and Models**

As noted earlier, economic globalization, the emergence of knowledge as a primary resource and the internationalization of major markets have created a global economy. Economic theories, models and plans, which were previously developed and used successfully to describe and analyze the reality of national economies, have consequently lost their validity. This has created need for a new economic theory suited to a world economy; a “theory appropriate to a world economy in which knowledge has become the key economic resource and the dominant, if not the only source of comparative advantage,”<sup>134</sup> according to Peter Drucker.

The notion of economic independence, one of the models now rendered obsolete, was frequently sought and employed by nations as a strategy to build national industries and economies free from dependence on foreign products and markets. Import substitution, protection of major industries, and export subsidies were used to build and sustain the desired economic independence. Yet no nation has been able to build a modern economy on the basis of import substitution, and protectionism has had only negative consequences.

Import substitution cannot work without protectionism because new industries producing the substitutes need to be protected against foreign competition, at least until they approach maturity. But an

economic policy of import substitution and protectionism serves to give national industries a captive market, shields them from foreign competition, and thus fails to give them real incentives to innovate, update, and be more competitive. And this, in turn, limits their need to expand production and modernize, weakens their desire to export, and, consequently, limits their ability to create new employment opportunities.

Economic independence is an attractive slogan that inspires the imagination of nationalists everywhere, and particularly in the Third World, where colonialism formerly dominated and economic dependency is perceived to have hindered national development. But as early as the fifteenth century, when trade began to expand quickly and economic activities began to diversify, no country was able to achieve economic independence or be self-sufficient. Now, in the new emerging age of knowledge, economic globalization has moved all major industries, markets, and fields of knowledge beyond even interdependence and into a state of virtual economic integration, making a strategy based on economic independence not only unachievable, but also irrational. In short, economic independence was a misconceived idea born during an age of increasing interdependence. Since then, it has been proven to be a strategy based on mistaken assumptions that seek to create an unrealistic reality.

Economic viability is another concept that was misconceived because it was based on assumptions that were losing their validity. Viable economies, it has been thought and argued, are those national economies that have adequate natural resources to provide the necessary raw materials for manufacturing and sufficiently large markets to support modern industries. The economies of poorer and smaller nations, consequently, were not considered viable and thus were unattractive as potential investment and export markets. Consequently, many smaller and poorer nations aspiring to political independence were and still are treated unfairly. Their economies, it has been argued, cannot support independence, as if political independence necessitates

economic independence and economic independence is a required element of political independence.

Singapore, a small island that practically lacks natural resources and has a small population, was considered one of those smaller, poorer nations incapable of building a viable economy. But Singapore, with a population about four percent of that of Egypt and a land area equal to one-thousandth of Egypt's land area had, around the end of the twentieth century, built a national economy (in gross domestic product terms) more than 1.5 times that of Egypt. Similarly, Singapore presents another interesting contrast to Nigeria, which is a country rich in natural resources and energy. Singapore's population is about 2 percent of Nigeria's and its area is about one-thousandth of Nigeria's, but the size of its economy is more than double that of Nigeria. And unlike both the Egyptian and Nigerian economies, the Singaporean economy is modern, dynamic, largely knowledge-based and moving toward technologically based services.

Every economy is viable regardless of its size, its endowment of natural resources, and its production base; economies throughout history have been and continue to be viable. Even the tribal economy, which is based primarily on hunting, grazing and food gathering, rather than real production, has proven over tens of thousands of years its viability. Therefore, the relevant question regarding the state of any economy today is not how viable it is but how competitive it can be. Competitiveness, meanwhile, has become a function of knowledge, not natural resources, and an aspect of cultural sophistication and economic organization, not of strategic location or political structure.

The emergence of knowledge as the primary economic resource and the globalization of the world economy have, furthermore, invalidated theories of the comparative advantage in general and the labor theory of comparative advantage in particular. Countries, it was thought, are endowed with certain human and natural resources that give them a comparative advantage over others in certain economic endeavors. And this, in turn, enables each country to make progress by exploiting its own economic advantage. Countries that are strategically located

have, according to this theory, an economic advantage that enables them to attract investment capital and play an active role in trade and financial affairs. But cheap, safe, and easy transportation and communications systems have internationalized most markets and thus robbed the so-called strategically located countries of much of their economic advantage.

The rules of the comparative advantage theory are also supposed to govern trade among nations. Groups of countries producing surpluses of raw materials, agricultural products and/or cheap energy and other countries producing surpluses of manufactured goods and advanced services were supposed to be natural trading partners. The bulk of international trade, consequently, was supposed to be concentrated among such groups of nations, or between the developed and developing countries. While this was true in the recent past, it is no longer true today.

Advanced science and sophisticated technology in the age of knowledge have reduced dependence on raw materials by producing better, often cheaper, substitutes. In addition, mechanization, modern agricultural methods and bioengineering have vastly improved the productivity of agriculture, particularly in the industrial and post-industrial societies, reducing their need for agricultural imports. Meanwhile, relatively high population growth rates in the Third World countries have increased domestic demand for agricultural products, thus reducing the availability of agricultural surpluses for export. As a result, incomes generated by the export of both raw materials and agricultural products declined, which in turn caused the capacity of Third World countries to import and export to decline as well.

Meanwhile, the economies of the industrialized countries have increasingly become interdependent and specialized; they now form one larger economy whose components do trade with one another as a matter of necessity to sustain progress and ensure efficiency. Because of these developments, the bulk of international trade is now concentrated among the most industrialized countries and regions of the world. As a result, the traditional and less developed nations and

economies have become very small players in the field of international trade; they no longer have a meaningful comparative economic advantage to exploit and use as a springboard to industrialize and develop on their own.

The theory of labor comparative advantage is another important theory that globalization and knowledge have invalidated. It was thought that a state or nation that possessed a large pool of cheap labor would have an important economic advantage that could be used to produce manufactured products cheaply and thus to enable the state to compete successfully in the international market. But the experience of all countries possessing a large pool of cheap labor has proven that labor does not represent by itself an economic advantage. Egypt, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mexico and many others have large pools of cheap labor; nonetheless, none of these countries has been able to use its labor pool as a springboard toward industrialization and genuine development. Economically productive labor need not be cheap only; it needs also to be skilled and disciplined and to value hard work. While cheap labor failed to help Egypt develop, expensive labor did not stop Sweden or Japan from further development.

"Tangible economic and social results do not depend upon abstract potential, but on developed capabilities."<sup>135</sup> Labor capabilities are usually developed through socialization, formal education, and on-the-job training with the aim of giving labor the appropriate skills and attitudes to perform and continue to learn in an increasingly complex world. While certain manufacturing operations, such as textile, require little or no particular skills, most other industries need particular skills and knowledge. Even the manufacturing of textiles cannot be performed properly if workers lack discipline and have no respect for work. "The comparative advantage that now counts is the application of knowledge,"<sup>136</sup> which can be acquired only through formal education. John Kenneth Galbraith wrote that "if we look around the world today we see no country with a literate population that is poor and no country with an illiterate population that is anything but poor."<sup>137</sup>

## The Future of Inflation

Inflation, which means higher than usual rates of increase in the general price level, has lost most of its power; it has been contained and brought under control in most parts of the world. Only in certain developing countries, where the economy is not free and state intervention in economic life is substantial, and where national currencies are not convertible and protectionism is pursued as a state policy, do high inflation rates still present a problem. They also present a problem in most former communist countries, where the state is weak, the economy is in transition, relevant laws and regulations are still being developed, financial institutions are shaky, and corruption is widespread.

Inflation usually occurs when demand for essential goods and services exceeds supply. Excess demand is usually caused by shortages of certain goods, a sudden and large increase in the supply of money, or a sudden and large increase in the cost of production, which could be due to labor shortages or rising prices of raw materials, particularly energy. If the supply of goods and services desired by both consumers and producers alike were elastic enough to meet anticipated demand, neither inflation nor its negative socioeconomic consequences would occur.

High inflation rates are a socioeconomic problem that complicates economic management and causes incomes to be redistributed in ways that deepen inequality in society. They raise the price of economic goods and services in general, causing the purchasing power of money to decline. And this, in turn, reduces the living standards of people whose incomes are fixed and others whose incomes do not increase as fast as the rate of inflation does. Inflation raises the prices of certain necessities of life beyond the reach of some, causing poverty to spread and deepen and the quality of life for the poor to deteriorate further. Inflation also causes interest rates to rise, making the borrowing of money more costly, which adversely affects business investment and credit financing.

State intervention to control or contain inflation seldom waits until inflation is a reality and its negative impact is widely felt; many states

have in place monitoring agencies to anticipate inflation and policy mechanisms to deal with its social and economic consequences. Governmental measures to fight inflation, however, have one major objective in mind: to maintain a balance between supply and demand, particularly with respect to goods and services that represent a substantial portion of the cost of living and the cost of production. This objective is usually sought through the implementation of such measures as the raising of interest rates to discourage borrowing and encourage savings, increasing taxes to limit the increase of disposable incomes, and reducing government spending to moderate economic growth rates and thus demand for labor.

The major roots of inflation, therefore, are to be found in the supply of and demand for economic goods, labor, and money. In today's global economy, goods, labor and money are becoming increasingly mobile and abundant; they are quickly losing their identities and political attachments. And because goods and services, as well as capital and knowledge labor, can move and in fact do move across political borders with increasing ease, no major shortages of supply are likely to happen in the near future unless this movement is restricted. As for the major raw materials and energy, their supplies are either increasing or holding steady, their prices are either declining or hardly increasing in real terms, and more substitutes are being developed and used successfully. Only oil represents a less manageable problem at this time.

Therefore, serious shortages of labor, capital, or economic goods have become a thing of the past. And because knowledge is abundant and increasing and has proven to be a good substitute for labor, land, and capital, inflation has become more of a ghost than a reality in most countries, particularly the industrialized ones. Its threat is remote and faint; and it is perceived and feared only by those who experienced it in the past or by those whose incomes are largely fixed or whose jobs are in low demand.

In fact, all of the industrialized countries of Western Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia have passed the stage of serious inflation.

Nevertheless, state policies aimed at protecting certain national industries or limiting immigration for political reasons, and policies intended to engineer economic expansion to ameliorate unemployment, could possibly revive inflation. Countries still functioning outside the realm of the ever-expanding global economy are more likely to experience the recurrence of both inflation and recession and to suffer their pains. These are countries that live in the past, follow failed and outdated policies that serve only to further isolate their economies and marginalize their international roles.

In 1999, when the American economy grew faster than expected and the unemployment rate declined to the 4% level, the Federal Reserve Board began raising interest rates incrementally to contain the perceived threat of inflation. Increasing the cost of money was intended to discourage borrowing and investment, moderate demand for labor, and thus the rate of economic growth. But in a global economy, such a policy is misguided and, therefore, more likely to be counterproductive. In fact, only few weeks after the last incremental raise of interest rates, the Federal Reserve Board was forced to reverse itself and cut interest rates because the economy began to weaken faster than anticipated and desired.

While raising the cost of money can moderate rising inflation rates, it hurts the economies of all nations, particularly those that need to borrow to develop and feed their poor. It also causes world development to slow down and fear of globalization to increase. In a global economy, the threat of national inflation should be dealt with in a manner that helps rather than hurts the poor and the needy. For example, more immigrants should be admitted to the U.S. and to other nations having similar problems. Such a measure would increase the labor pool in the countries where labor is becoming scarce and ameliorate the social and economic problems where labor is abundant and unemployment is high. It would furthermore accelerate the pace of globalization and economic expansion and makes the benefits of both felt by more people in the world.

Other factors helping to control inflation include the following:

1. Increased competition in international markets and growing numbers of product substitutes, which leave little chance for any corporation or product to gain and maintain monopoly power for a long time.
2. Increased economic integration, which enables large companies to offset increases in labor cost in one country by outsourcing and obtaining cheap parts and services from other countries and by relocating operations where labor is less expensive.
3. The increasing importance of knowledge as an economic resource and as a substitute for land, labor, and capital, and the decline in its relative cost and scarcity.
4. A growing pool of knowledge workers willing to travel to countries where better employment opportunities exist.
5. The increasing power of transnational corporations in general, which enables them to influence government policies and labor attitudes regarding taxes and wages in their favor.
6. Rising labor productivity due primarily to technological innovations, better communications and information systems, advanced knowledge, outsourcing, mergers, and improved management of inventories.
7. The establishment of the World Trade Organization as an international body to encourage trade and gradually remove obstacles that hinder its expansion.

Yet despite these factors, no one should pronounce inflation dead. Uncertainty, financial instability, and bad governmental policies could reignite moderate inflation. The most important step that needs to be taken to weaken inflation further is to help the major nations of the Third World complete their economic and socio-cultural restructuring, enter the Second World of industry, and be fully integrated into the global economy. This would enlarge all markets for all major products, integrate the economic interests of participating countries, and thus reduce the vulnerability of most national economies to both inflation and recession.

Economic behavior and activities are important aspects of everyday life in society. Social activities and relationships affect economic behavior and are affected by economic relationships and interests. While no society can survive without solving its economic problem, no economy can manage its resources satisfactorily without people's active involvement in economic decisions and activities. This makes the link between society and economy strong, and the dependence of their relationships mutual.

Economies do not function in a vacuum, but rather within socio-cultural and political environments that define their limits, shape their structures and goals, and affect their directions. Societies, in order to enable their economies to perform well, need to continually transform their socio-cultural, legal and political environments to facilitate investment, economic diversification, competition, and expansion of technological applications. While economics is closely associated with science and technology, cultures are more rooted in traditions and belief systems. Because of that, a lag almost always exists between economic change and socio-cultural transformation, which gives the state the responsibility to moderate the first or speed up the latter. States that choose to do nothing or fail to shorten the lag time risk social segmentation, corruption, economic stagnation and/or political unrest.

Socio-cultural transformation changes the way the economy is organized, making it more or less productive, more or less equitable, more or less stable, and more or less dynamic. A major change in economic structure and organization causes socio-cultural change, making the society more or less open, more or less progressive, more or less democratic, more or less cohesive. When economic change affects only a region, a sector, or a group within a society, differences between social classes will become more pronounced, and socioeconomic and socio-cultural gaps will deepen. When socio-cultural change affects only one region or one group in society, economic duality and social fragmentation will follow. Therefore, neither culture nor economy can stay the same while the other changes, and neither can change

without affecting the other. Because of that, the relationship between culture and modern economy is dynamic; it usually exhibits more change than stability, more conflict than harmony, and more tension than peace, but ultimately more progress than stagnation.

## Chapter Seven

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### Ideology and Society

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An ideology is a grand idea or a social philosophy around which people cluster and on the basis of which coalitions are built and activated. Ideology functions as a social system to organize and educate people, motivating them to develop certain attitudes and adopt certain worldviews. As such, ideology tends to govern a broad range of human relationships and to influence greatly the direction and pace of socio-political developments in society. And since cultures represent the social glue that holds societies together, ideology has become the core of culture, particularly older cultures.

Cultures whose ideological core is strong and well-defined, tend to be rigid and conservative, allowing little personal freedom and initiative, and thus less amenable to change. In contrast, cultures whose ideological core is weak and vaguely defined tend to be flexible and progressive, allowing more personal freedom and initiative, and thus more amenable to change. Wherever ideology is strong and dominant, change is usually slow and very limited, making genuine progress hard to attain. And wherever ideology is weak or on the decline, change tends to be more or less dynamic, making progress not only possible, but also attainable.

Ideology is either particular, concerned with only one people, such as nationalism, or universal, concerned with humanity as a whole, such as Christianity or communism. Since ideology represents the core

of culture, it tends to shape the attitudes of people and sharpen their collective sense of identity and mission in life. Because of that role, ideology makes its own adherents more committed to the welfare of their own group or nation and, therefore, less tolerant of other groups and their particular goals and beliefs. Consequently, ideology gives its followers an excuse to be prejudiced, belittle others, and discriminate against them, even at times hate and harm them. Thus, "the insubstantial things we call ideas can trigger the loftiest idealism and the basest cruelty."<sup>138</sup>

Throughout modern history, progress has been closely associated with the idea of freedom, which provides the socio-political environment needed to protect people and their rights, allowing them to pursue personal goals, engage in new activities, and adopt non-traditional lifestyles. Freedom facilitates individual and group initiative, political participation, scientific research, liberal education, technological innovation and healthy competition among the many groups and interests in society.

Progress is made in every society and at every level through a social process that has two sides, conflict and change. Change, by its very nature, undermines the balance that exists between and among power relationships, creating winners and losers and causing conflict. Conflict, on the other hand, causes relationships to become unstable or largely dysfunctional and thus creates a need to restructure them, a need that only change can satisfy. Consequently, the way conflict is managed tends to influence the nature, magnitude and direction of change; and the way change is introduced and pursued tends to influence the nature, magnitude and ramifications of conflict.

Because ideology is a worldview with its own values and goals, change motivated or instigated by it tends to influence most aspects of life. As a result, change driven by ideology, pacifist ideologies excluded, tends to be predictable; the path to be followed is revolutionary; and the new attitudes are radical. Violence, moreover, is often promoted and accepted as a legitimate means to effect change. In fact, societies dominated by ideology lack the social tools to deal with either conflict

or change peacefully. The Soviet Union under communism, Germany under Nazism, Serbia under nationalism, and Afghanistan under religious fanaticism are good examples of societies that were dominated by ideology and where violence and coercion were used widely and often to deal with conflict and change. In such societies, every deviation is usually defined in absolute terms demanding swift, uncompromising action. Conflict and change, as a result, become an exclusive power game played by an elite that uses violence and coercion to shape and reshape social philosophy.

In contrast, open societies, where political and social plurality exist and are tolerated, and where ideology plays a minor role, tend to have flexible rules and pragmatic tools to deal with conflict and change. They view conflict and change as natural, as social mechanisms needed to restructure fractured relationships and achieve societal goals. Consequently, change is encouraged, conflict is managed, and compromise solutions are sought and implemented to maximize the number of winners and minimize the number of losers.

Every relationship in society has at least two components that are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing. One represents cooperation; the other represents competition among the parties concerned. Relationships that lack one of these components reflect either dependency or antagonism. Relationships having too much cooperation, which ideology tends to impose, are dull and stagnant and lack dynamism, and thus are largely unproductive. Relationships characterized by too much competition, which a lack of direction tends to produce, are unstable and highly volatile and thus largely conflictive. For a relationship to be viable, productive and progressive, the level of cooperation must be perceived by the concerned parties as good or, at least, satisfactory; the level of competition ought to be perceived as desirable or, at least, tolerable.

Issues of conflict are usually divided into two general categories, value-related and interest-related. Because values are closely associated with deeply held convictions, value-related issues of conflict, such as belief systems, national sovereignty and self-determination,

are considered existential, and thus are rarely subject to compromise. In contrast, interest-related issues of conflict, such as trade terms, mineral rights, and access to water and other natural resources, are considered functional and thus are subject to compromise.<sup>139</sup>

Ideology tends to consider all issues of conflict value-related and to deal with them as existential, making violence and coercion, not compromise, the means most often used to resolve conflict. In fact, the history of all ideologically dominated societies, regardless of their place and time, has been shaped by war and colored by violence. No ideology has been able to perceive another ideology as legitimate, and no ideological state, be it religious or socio-political, has been able to live willingly in peace with a neighboring ideological state and accept it as equal. Ideologies were and still are perceived by their followers as mutually exclusive and inherently antagonistic. "Competing self-interests allow for compromise, whereas rigid moral arguments lead to war."<sup>140</sup>

Relationships among individuals and within and between organizations and systems are based either on interests or on values, or on both. Interest-related relationships encourage people to maximize their gains when winning is possible, and to minimize their losses when losing is unavoidable. Acts to maximize gains and the pleasure of winning, and attempts to minimize losses and the pain of losing are both causes of conflict and forces for change. However, because such relationships stem primarily from desires and deal largely with material issues not rooted in belief or ideological systems, they are susceptible to compromise. As a consequence, the conflict they provoke tends to be tolerable and manageable.

Value-related relationships, on the other hand, induce people and organizations to cooperate more and compete less to improve their relative positions and/or advance their causes, often at the expense of others. Such relationships are not byproducts of desires and material goals, but rather are rooted in ideologies, convictions, cultural traditions, and/or religious beliefs, which are issues of right and wrong that can hardly be changed or compromised. As a result, the cooperative and

the competitive relationships that value-related issues build to link people and organizations together are based primarily on either shared ideas and ideals or on clashing convictions and hostile perceptions. Once established and functional, such relationships are stable, strong and deep-rooted, causing change to be slow and incremental, and conflict prolonged and painful.

Ideologies can be divided into two general categories, religious and socio-political. The ascendance of either one in society tends to lead to the suppression of the other and the reduction of its ability to shape society in its own image. Since the dominant ideology opts almost always for continuity and stability, the subdued one opts almost always for change and subversion, causing instability and conflict to form an undercurrent in society. Nevertheless, both ideologies can be incorporated into one state system. Serbia, Iran and Israel are cases where religion and nationalism were incorporated into one state system, causing conflict to be lodged in the consciousness of society. This limits the society's ability to see the contradictions inherent in its system, and thus its ability to deal with the other rationally and peacefully.

When asked about the reasons for Iran's lack of economic development, President Mohammed Khatami said: "It is impossible to have economic development in a socially and politically underdeveloped society."<sup>141</sup> The Iranian president, while making social and political development a precondition for economic development, acknowledged, albeit implicitly, that the Iranian system of government has failed to achieve social, political or economic development. Nevertheless, the Iranian President stopped short of blaming ideology for the sad state of socioeconomic and political affairs in his country.

Ideology, be it religious or socio-political, tends to be deterministic, believing in fate. It denies ordinary people a role in shaping their own future and the future of their societies. Because of that attitude, ideology tends to belittle people, their ideas, their personal needs and occupations—in a word, their humanity. It considers the individual a mere tool to be used, an expendable piece of wood to light the fireplace of

history. To ideology, history glows only when it burns people, leaving their ashes behind to remind us of the fire and not of the warmth it produced or of the tragedies of those who produced it.

### **Religion**

Religion in general is a system of beliefs and practices based on a conviction that a supernatural power or god exists and has control over the world it has created. It further believes that God is the only power that can and does intervene occasionally to change the course of history and the fate of the world's inhabitants. People, to reach that god and gain his blessing, are called upon to believe in certain mysteries, follow certain rules, adopt certain attitudes, and perform certain tasks or rituals.

When human societies first appeared, people were able to use only their instincts to meet their basic needs of survival and physical security. Their lack of knowledge regarding the environment and the absence of tools to deal with it effectively made people more of a product of their environment than masters of it. Their apparent helplessness led them to discover the ideas of god and religion. God was the power that created the universe, and religion was the set of beliefs, values and rituals that regulated man's relationship with God. People thus constructed religion to suit their needs and calm their fears and give meaning to life in general.

Religion, therefore, was a system invented by man to establish a channel of communication with the gods and ensure that people would obey their orders, avoid their wrath, and gain their blessing. To do that, all religions prescribed certain practices of worship and asked their followers to make certain sacrifices deemed necessary to please and appease the gods. Depending on the particular characteristics of the environment, people invented different gods, assigned to them different roles, and worshipped them. Consequently, people were willing to do whatever religion asked of them and to offer the sacrifices demanded to gain the approval of their gods and avoid their wrath.

As a result, gods became a power to be obeyed, not challenged; and man's unconditional surrender to God's will became the only path to attain happiness. Religion, consequently, became the social system that defined that path, identified its components, described its functions and limits, and enforced its laws. And this, in turn, made religious practices, rituals, and symbols sacred, unifying the believers and providing societies with a strong pillar of stability. "Ancient societies were held together primarily by religion,"<sup>142</sup> which affected people's attitudes and molded their worldviews.

Gradually, religion emerged as a social institution, speaking in the name of the highest authority in the universe and representing the most sacred and feared in life. Consequently, religion became the core of every living culture, especially cultures of the pre-industrial societies. Even in cultures whose core has been reduced to a set of basic values and traditions, not a religion, such values and traditions are usually rooted in or shaped by a religious legacy. The Arab and Chinese cultures are good examples of cultures that are gradually and hesitantly losing their religious core, yet they continue to espouse values derived from the religions of Islam and Buddhism, respectively.

Before the dawn of the age of agriculture, every tribe had its own god and religion, and thus its religious rituals. As a result, "religion and race went together,"<sup>143</sup> as one believed in one's own people's gods. And despite the appearance of the monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—as universal faiths in the latter part of the agricultural age, religion continued to be associated with race for a very long time.

Judaism, for example, was born as a religion for the Israelites, who used it as a faith around which they built an exclusive culture. Jewish resistance to accepting non-Jews as religious converts has kept the number of Judaism's followers very small compared to the numbers of followers of the other monotheistic religions. Around the end of the twentieth century, the number of Jews in the world was about 12 million and declining, despite the fact that Judaism is the oldest monotheistic religion and the mother of both Christianity and Islam.

In fact, with the exception of Christianity and Islam, all worldly religions are primarily race-related or region-related; expansion to other regions and races has largely been due to migration and expansion, not conversion. Really only Christianity and Islam, claiming universality, have continued to expand and recruit converts since their inception.

The major religions, namely Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism, were born about 7,000 to 9,000 years after the dawn of the age of agriculture. While Judaism is the oldest, having been born around 1200 BC, Islam is the youngest; it arose in the second decade of the seventh century AD.<sup>144</sup> This means that all of the great religions of the world were born within less than 2,000 years, signifying that the same social and economic conditions of human development were able to travel and transform almost all peoples of the world in the same period. In fact, the Asian religions of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Taoism, as well as Islam, were born within 200 to 300 years of each other.

Karen Armstrong says, "Religious systems reflected the changed economic and social conditions. For reasons that we do not entirely understand, all the chief civilizations developed along parallel lines, even when there was no commercial contact."<sup>145</sup> Judaism, for example, was born in Egypt when that country was living in an advanced stage of the agricultural age. It seemed to have come in response to economic and social conditions that tolerated slavery and inequality. And when the Roman Empire arrived, about 1,200 years later, at roughly the same level of socio-economic development, Christianity emerged as a new religion to fight for equality and social justice. Within the next 600 years, other parts of the world, particularly China, India, and Arabia, arrived at the same developmental level, giving birth to new religions, the most important of which are Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

After the advancement of the age of agriculture, cities were built and empires were established. As a result, the number of tribes decreased and so did the number of gods. Gods, who belonged to individuals and families, were also demoted, their influence in society

reduced. Nevertheless, all peoples seemed to have accepted religion as a faith and a set of values and customs around which they organized their societies. But since no one could prove or disprove claims made by religion, magic and myth, which existed before the birth of organized religion, as well as older rituals, became part of all religious beliefs, enabling them to play similar roles in society throughout history. "The priest as well as the magician has a role to play: to provide a systematic procedure of sanctification in order to accommodate the needs of believers with a meaningful worldview."<sup>146</sup>

While almost every religion believes that it is the only true path to God, Hinduism believes that each religion serves as a different path to God. It claims, "God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times and countries. One can reach God if one follows any of the paths with whole hearted devotion."<sup>147</sup> And although it claims to be the best path to God, Hinduism urges each person to follow the religion of his or her own people, thus reinforcing the unifying role of religion in society and its affiliation with race. It also believes that the Savior, be it Jesus, Muhammad or Krishna, is one and the same; he appears in different places at different times for the same purposes.

Religious teachings and rituals were meant to help those individuals seeking to find the meaning of their lives and suffering. And since religion was a product of the age of agriculture, it had to "adapt itself to the demands and timetables of agriculture."<sup>148</sup> It accepted agriculture as a worthy way of life, adopted most of its values and traditions, or simply its culture, and promoted the notion of life after death. The life cycle of plants, by demonstrating continuous renewal, and preexisting myths as discussed below, apparently convinced the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam of a life after death, an idea not much different from that of reincarnation, which is widely believed by the followers of Asian religions. But by adapting itself to the values and traditions of the agricultural age, religion tied its fate to that of the agricultural civilization.

All world religions, by adapting themselves to the traditions and conditions of their times, have accepted some myths that existed

before their birth, the most notable of these myths being the notion of life after death. Long before the birth of Judaism, the Assyro-Babylonian culture believed in an afterlife, as did the Egyptians of the Pharoanic era, who used mummification to preserve the bodies of the dead. The ancient Egyptians believed that "as long as the corpse, or at least a material image of it, subsisted, life continued."<sup>149</sup> Friedrich Hegel cites Herodotus as having said, "The Egyptians were the first to express the thought that the soul of man is immortal."<sup>150</sup> They even believed that the soul goes first through a system of justice before the afterlife is resumed. Similarly, the Chinese talk about ancestors being living spirits, and about the need to keep them happy. Even the Aztec, Inca, and Mayan cultures believed in an immortal soul, with the dead passing from one phase of life to another while becoming invisible.

Peoples of the past, just like peoples of the present, feared death and wanted to deny it and thus believed in immortality. Religions could do nothing but reinforce this belief through the idea of the continued life of the soul. Religions did, however, claim that life after death would not treat people equally— there would be heaven for the good and hell for the bad. Religion, being the path to both God and heaven, assumed the role of guiding its followers in preparing for the heavenly eternal life by doing good deeds and avoiding evil ones.

The rise of settled communities gave birth to the state and politics. Governments felt that they had a responsibility to preserve the communities' values, customs, and traditions, which were and still are issues of concern to all cultures and religions. Communities that were established before the birth of today's known world religions had semi-religious authoritarian monarchies whose rulers customarily succeeded their parents and claimed a strong relationship with the gods. In most instances, the leadership of both religion and state tended to claim kinship with the gods. In many places, the emperor was considered the son of God or a descendant of the gods. In China, for example, the emperor was considered the son of Heaven.

Agriculture as a way of life and an economic system continued to dominate the world until the middle of the eighteenth century, when

industry began to challenge its dominance in Europe. Continuity of the same economic activity, dependence on nature, rigid beliefs and traditional social systems made change and progress rare. "However agriculture was organized, no serious change in the way of living occurred till after 1700."<sup>151</sup> Even thereafter, primitive, semi-tribal enclaves persisted for generations in every part of Europe, refusing to be assimilated. "Hundreds of dialects and equally numerous local semi-barbaric religious cults sustained these [enclaves] of the past in the midst of modern centralized states."<sup>152</sup>

Societal continuity and stability maintained by agriculture, sustained by a religious belief system and enforced by an authoritarian state, made life seem changeless. The lack of advanced technologies to transform people's state and way of living made ideas and charismatic leadership, not science, economics, or technology, the major forces of change in society. Religion, despite having accepted the way of life of the agricultural society and sanctioned most of its traditional values and customs, played the role of the idea of change in older times. It promoted new values that called for equality and justice, and established new rules for relationships among its constituents. But once established at the core of culture, religion became a pillar of stability and a formidable obstacle to social change. No real change was possible at the time, and no new ideas had a fighting chance, unless accepted or supported by the dominant religious institutions and their leadership.

As human development entered the transitional period from the agricultural to the industrial age in the fifteenth century, the newly emerging societies began to adopt different, less traditional values and attitudes. But neither the older culture nor the prevailing religion was willing to accept the change; they instead waged war against all ideas they perceived as threatening to their entrenched role in society. Meanwhile, science, reason, technology and commerce were gradually exposing the fallacies of some religious claims and the irrelevance of certain cultural values and social relationships, while convincing more people of their logic and benefits.

By the time the industrial revolution began to make its presence felt in the second half of the eighteenth century, the old culture and its religious core had lost the battle; a new culture began to emerge and a new ideological core began to compete successfully with a greatly weakened religious establishment. Nationalism, which emerged as a socio-political ideology, began to transform state cultures and shape individual and group attitudes and consciousness. It was a development that signaled the triumph of the political process over the socio-cultural one.

Since no religion can prove its claims scientifically, the only way for religion to convince its followers of its claims is by resorting to the purported experiences of some faithful individuals whose deep convictions caused them to live unique experiences. However, these claimed experiences could be neither corroborated nor objectively validated. They cannot even provide a rational explanation for how and why they happened. Thus the new age of industry, anchored in science, technology, and reason, drove both magic and religion out of the cultural core, vastly demoting their role and influence in the new industrial society.<sup>153</sup>

Traditional and primitive societies that failed to embrace science and reason have continued to value magic and organize themselves around religion. They are societies that are primarily agricultural and have no real understanding of modern science. Claimed miracles, therefore, continue to perform in such societies some of the roles that technology and medicine perform in advanced societies. In most developing countries where the traditional role of religion is preserved and revered, old cultural values and relationships have survived the great transformations of the industrial world without much change. Traditional elites in such societies, being exposed to both science and reason through travel and study abroad, are forced to live a life of hypocrisy, contradictions and pretensions. And this, in turn, makes progress and social transformation less likely, while making social stratification and the disintegration of national societies into competing sub-societies more likely.

The decline of religion as a body of thought, and the decline of its societal role as a cultural core, were caused by several developments experienced by Europe over some 500 years, covering the ages of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Among those developments are the following:

1. The increasing tendency of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to live a worldly, affluent life and to ignore the predicament of the poor. In the thirteenth century, for example, the Inquisition was protested and the worldly behavior of the popes was harshly criticized. In the fifteenth century, the corruption of the Church was exposed as the popes began to do everything for money and nothing without money. The Church, meanwhile, emerged as the single largest landholder in Europe.
2. The expansion of trade and financial transactions, some of which were either opposed or condemned by the Church, forcing those who were benefiting from such activities to question the Church's teachings and authority, and consequently to work to undermine its power.
3. The growing alliance among the emerging merchant class, the city dwellers, and the kings and princes who sought to free themselves from the control of the Church. They began to consolidate their economic and political powers, forming a formidable foe that challenged the authority of the Church and its economic teachings.
4. The discovery of the New World, which fascinated people and challenged many of their older convictions, such as the idea that the earth is flat. The discovery also increased competition among the major European nations of the time, flooded some countries with unprecedented wealth, and opened new frontiers for the adventurers and the oppressed.
5. The dawn of the age of technology, reason, and science, which served to undermine the logic of many religious teachings and forced the Church to act forcefully and irrationally to impede and condemn scientific and philosophical inquiry in general. It

was a development that weakened the church's appeal and damaged its reputation beyond repair.

6. The development of printing, which encouraged education, facilitated the dissemination of information and revolutionized intellectual interaction, allowed dissenting voices critical of the Church to spread and claims followers. "Books became in the sixteenth century things for entertainment as well as instructions—a transformation as great as any in human history."<sup>154</sup>
7. The strength of Reformation movement, which refuted certain Church teachings and practices, split the Church into several religious denominations and promoted new work and business ethics. The Reformation started in the sixteenth century when Martin Luther protested the sale of indulgences by the Church.
8. "The growth of new tastes, desire for comfort, and even love of ostentation among the rich. Medieval man had devoted much of his spare income and labor to building cathedrals, churches, abbeys, and castles. Early modern man has felt other possible attractive uses for his wealth,"<sup>155</sup> uses he could not pursue without abandoning strict adherence to Church teachings.
9. The involvement of the Church in war and its use of religion as a pretext to wage war against its enemies. Religious wars caused great destruction and untold human suffering and completely ruined some regions, particularly in Germany. Religious wars ended in 1648 with the Westphalia Treaty, which called for the separation of state and religion and thus ended the dominating role and political authority of the Church in European public life forever.

In the age of agriculture, and among all traditionally agricultural societies, life was one of religion—religion was, and to a great extent still is, a lofty ideal to live and, if necessary, die for. In the age of industry, religion was reduced to a mere social system whose primary goal was and still is to create and sustain communities of faith. In other words, the industrial age transformed religion and its ideals and institutions into socio-cultural organizations whose objective is to meet the spiritual

needs of their members. And while people pay homage to religious ideals and give money to churches, sometimes generously, they seldom live or die for them.

In the age of knowledge, religion is rapidly becoming personal and familial, rather than communal. The church, meanwhile, has become a place for those who lack spirituality and others who need moral support to gain spiritual comfort, as well as for those marginalized by the breathtaking pace of socioeconomic change. And while people are still willing to give money to the church, they expect their personal needs to be fulfilled in return. The church, as a result, is forced to tailor its services to the particular needs of its clientele. And in doing so, it competes with other churches, branches out, provides drive-in services, and becomes more of a theater where shows are performed, causing the old religious ideals to be subdued and subordinated to personal interests.

### **Nationalism**

Nationalism, like religion, is a social idea that espouses certain values, attitudes, and relationships meant to strengthen unity in society and influence the shape of its culture, particularly its political culture. Nationalism believes that peoples form nations, and that each nation has its own culture, language, history, and, above all, homeland. Unlike religion, nationalism is more concerned with political organization, foreign affairs and economic activity than with issues of life and death and personal behavior. Although tension has dominated the relationship between religion and nationalism in modern times, both ideologies can coexist peacefully and even merge together to form a bigger idea at the core of the national culture and the society's superstructure. The affiliation of race and religion make such a merger not only possible but also probable, particularly among smaller nations and religious minorities living in the pre-industrial era. While the merger of religion and nationalism has made several societies more cohesive and strong, it led them to become more aggressive and racist.

Authority, which comes down from either church or state, has traditionally been used to convince or force people to subdue their passions and interests for the sake of either God or country as the case may be. The affiliation of race and religion makes it quite possible to subordinate man's passions and interests to both God and country at the same time. In fact, nationalism can marshal the forces of religion to serve political ends, as the Serbs have demonstrated in the 1990s; and religion can marshal the political aspirations of a nation to serve religious ends, as the Islamic mullahs of Iran demonstrated in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, however, the history of both religion and nationalism indicates that these ideologies were and continue to be used as means to demand cultural homogeneity and political submission, rather than to accept cultural diversity and promote freedom.

The origins of nationalism as a socio-political ideology can be traced back to the Spanish war against Arabs around the end of the fifteenth century. The Spanish movement combined both nationalism and religious Catholicism to unite and motivate Spaniards to fight to expel Arabs and Jews, Islam and Judaism from Spain. Following their victory, the new ideology and its political and religious organs carried out atrocities that included the killing, expulsion and forced conversion to Catholicism of both Arabs and Jews. Nationalism was thus born as a racist socio-political idea believing in the superiority of one race. It was prepared to discriminate against others and to commit vicious crimes to reach its goals.

Nations, in order to develop their particular identities, need, or claim to need, independence, with each nation having its own land and state, free from outside interference. That is, they need to live their own experiences, nurture their own cultures, develop their own languages, and build their own armies to defend themselves and promote their national interests. Consequently, the nation-state appeared as the embodiment of nationalism and the higher political authority in the land. And in light of the decline of Church authority, the emerging nation-states made sure that people subdued their individual passions

and interests for the sake of the country, as dictated, of course, by the nation's political leadership.

Developments that caused the decline of religion and its role in society were also helpful in enhancing the appeal of nationalism as an alternative ideology. Those developments included the expansion of trade, the growth of urban populations, the European invasion of the New World, the emergence of mercantilism as an economic philosophy, and interstate wars.

The Reformation, which weakened the Catholic Church and caused its splinter into several religious factions, was also instrumental in reviving and developing different European languages. With church influence on the wane, the Latin language of the Catholic Church began to lose its constituency. This loss was exacerbated by the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which in the process of separating church and state gave the head of each nation-state the right to determine the religion of his people. Consequently, the head of the state, often an absolute monarch, acquired religious, as well as political, authority. The development of printing was also helpful in making religious books, particularly the Bible, available in several languages. Printing also enabled European intellectuals to write and publish in their own native languages, and thus encouraged the development and spread of these languages.

As a nationalist consciousness develops among people, it makes them feel different from other groups. A feeling of superiority, more than anything else, is what makes people feel different, convinces them that they are entitled to have more than others, and encourages them to act, often aggressively, to attain envisioned means of superiority. Armies are built, taxes are imposed, and people are asked to serve to defend and promote the national interest. New history books are written, and older ones are rewritten, to glorify the past, belittle the history and achievements of others, and make claims, often without much justification, on other people's rights and lands. As a result, national minorities and ethnic and religious groups are discriminated against, denigrated, and often denied their legitimate rights.

Based on the foregoing, the nation-state, aided by mercantilism, became the primary force that promoted and practiced colonialism. And because nationalism was the ideology of choice, all groups and classes in society were happy to participate in the colonial enterprise. "From the mid-seventeenth century to the French Revolution late in the eighteenth, the idea that each state should seek its own economic independence by founding colonies and controlling large supplies of gold and silver shaped European policies and caused a series of imperial conflicts."<sup>156</sup>

Writing around the mid-nineteenth century, Karl Marx predicted that the working class in the European industrial states would not support imperialism, and that it would instead revolt against it. Max Weber, in contrast, said about fifty years later that imperialism could not succeed without the workers being a part of it, and that they would not rise against it. Marx underestimated the emotional power of nationalism and the lure of the economic benefits that workers would obtain from participating in the imperialist enterprise, and overestimated the impact of class conflict on the consciousness of the industrial workers. The racist attitude toward the "other" nourished by nationalism on the one hand, and the economic opportunity created by the export of industrial products and the import of raw materials on the other, encouraged and justified national participation in imperialism. But for the colonized and the dominated nations, imperialism was a catastrophe of immense consequences.

Spain and France were the first and most powerful nation-states to emerge in Europe with centralized authoritarian governments built around nationalism ready to wage war, compete for influence within and outside Europe, practice colonialism, repress national and religious minorities, and ignore the legitimate needs of their own peoples. In fact, the hallmark of a great monarchy at the time was to ignore the people and humble the proudest and noblest of them. Political absolutism, as a result, flourished in every European country and "victory in war took precedence over all else. The common strategy was total offense."<sup>157</sup>

Nevertheless, the absolute monarchy of Europe at the time was unable to have the power of the twentieth century totalitarian state, and thus it could not practice large-scale atrocities or even total suppression of opinion. The absolutist ideology "sanctioned the monarch's interference in every aspect of the national life, but most of the kings lacked both the temperament and the actual power to dominate their subjects totally or crush out racial and cultural minorities like a Hitler or a Mussolini or a Stalin."<sup>158</sup> The modern state's institutions of repression were still in the formative stage.

Philosopher of the time Thomas Hobbes said, "Violence was the natural result when nations either sought to conquer other nations or feared being themselves overrun. In the early seventeenth century every country of Europe fell into one or another of these categories, if not into both."<sup>159</sup> In fact, most of the history of the nation-state was dominated by violence and colored with blood. Nevertheless, the nation-state idea continued to gain support and to be realized, largely because of its call for political and economic independence, which nationalism and mercantilism embodied and promoted. By the end of the nineteenth century, most nations of Europe had claimed independence and achieved sovereignty over the lands of their fathers. In the meantime, the collapse of each empire led to the formation of new nation-states.

World War I was supposed to be "the war to end all wars," but instead it turned out to be a European civil war, in which the seeds of future wars were planted. The treaty that ended World War I in 1918 sanctioned all of the claimed and envisioned prerogatives of the European nation-state. It acknowledged, either explicitly or implicitly, the right of each state to sovereignty over the territories and peoples under its control. And while it recognized the independence of each state from outside interference, the treaty failed to repudiate the nation-state's colonialist and imperialist designs and enterprises. Consequently, neither the war nor the treaty did anything of significance to help free the colonized and suppressed peoples, particularly those of the non-European world.

One of the most famous points of the treaty, introduced by the American president Woodrow Wilson, was recognition of the self-determination of nations as an internationally sanctioned right. This right, which was reaffirmed by the United Nations and other international treaties after World War II, was later interpreted as the right to obtain political independence and to establish a nation-state. Nonetheless, national, racial, and religious minorities living within the recognized borders of a nation-state were not recognized as nations and therefore were not granted the same right to self-determination; their aspirations were considered a domestic issue, not an international one. As a result, European minorities and peoples living under the hegemony of the European nation-states were denied their political, human, and economic rights; and some were even subjected to persecution, murder and mass killing. In fact, by sanctioning the idea and the prerogatives of the nation-state, the treaty to end all wars created the conditions that allowed the extremes of nationalism to dominate the state and transform some states later into political and military machines to commit crimes against humanity.

As the nation-state was enjoying its golden age between the two world wars, new conditions and changed circumstances were fast undermining its political imperative and economic rationale. The crimes and atrocities committed against minorities in Europe and elsewhere, particularly against Jews in Germany and the colonized peoples of Africa and Asia in the name of a national interest, were increasingly being questioned or criticized by European intellectuals. Meanwhile, the imperialist enterprise was being exposed as less economically rewarding than had previously been believed, especially in light of the revolutions launched by the colonized peoples in the name of self-determination. In addition, the rapid expansion of international trade, the growing number of multinational corporations, economic interdependence, and economic thought promoting competition and free market economies were steadily undermining the economic rationale and the political reasoning on which the nation-state was built.

Following the conclusion of World War II, the United Nations was established as an international forum through which states could meet to discuss issues of common concern, resolve conflict, and manage peace. The new organization, by reaffirming the inalienable right of national self-determination, strengthened the nation-state, while at the same time moderating its extremist views and attitudes. Yet the atrocities committed by Nazism, fascism, communism, and Japanese nationalism were not convincing enough to declare nationalism and its political institutions a criminal enterprise or a failed political experiment. The nation-state has been the major actor on the international stage, and no replacement for it was sought or found. It still is the only internationally recognized political framework through which smaller nations and colonized peoples can seek independence and achieve freedom from foreign domination. The gradual termination of the colonialist enterprise in Asia and Africa led, moreover, to increasing the number of nation-states and enhancing the appeal of self-determination. Today, almost every war, every atrocity, and every violation of human rights is committed in the name of the nation-state or justified by the right to self-determination or sanctioned by religion.

Losing control of the national economy is probably the most significant damage the nation-state has so far sustained. The mobility of investment capital, the broad dissemination of knowledge, and growing economic integration at the global level have undermined the ability of every state to shape and manage its own economy and thus to deal successfully with such problems as unemployment, inflation and environmental degradation. Multinational corporations, which today represent more than two-thirds of the one hundred largest economies in the world, no longer seek instruction or even permission from their nation-states regarding their global activities. And because the management of such corporations has become separate from ownership and largely unanswerable to stockholders, most of the multinational corporations no longer feel an obligation to any country, ideology, state or community. Their employees, moreover, are scattered around the globe, and are increasingly becoming international in outlook and

more dependent on a global economy for economic opportunity, technical and scientific knowledge and, sometimes, even for survival. "The essential continuity between generations, on which every society necessarily depends for its integrity and survival, has begun to fray."<sup>160</sup> Consequently, the ability of the nation-state to perform its traditional role and protect claimed political and economic prerogatives has been eroded. A state that cannot provide opportunity and economic security for its own people cannot and is not entitled to demand their allegiance.

The globalization process, moreover, has caused certain national issues, such as human rights, environmental concerns and business corruption, to become international, and other international issues, such as terrorism, the production of unconventional weapons and racial conflict, to become national. As a result, the nation-state's prerogatives of sovereignty and non-interference in its domestic affairs are both questioned and weakened. Nationalism, by positioning itself as the organizing principle of the nation-state, has tied its fate to that of the traditional nation-state. Since the nation-state is on the decline, its economic power faltering, and its political prerogatives are under severe criticism, nationalism itself is destined sooner rather than later to face the same problems that the nation-state is facing. In today's world of globalization, "the nation-state [has] become an unnatural—even dysfunctional—organizational unit for thinking about economic activity," writes Kenichi Ohmae.<sup>161</sup>

Because of its very nature and structure and ideological underpinnings, the nation-state tends to think of economic decisions and choices in light of their political consequences, while political decisions in open societies are being made with increasing attention to economic considerations. Instead of thinking globally and acting locally as multinational corporations do, nation-states in general continue to think locally and act globally. No wonder that the former are growing in status, influence, size, and wealth, while the latter grow weaker, less effective, and less popular. As more societies move into the age of

knowledge, nationalism will face the same fate that religion faced, as more societies moved into the industrial age.

### **Future of Ideology**

Ideologies, regardless of their religious or socio-political nature, have had a poor record of delivering on their promises. One of the major promises of religion, for example, is the promise to free the slave as well as the master from the chains of slavery and the prejudices of class and race. Instead, it locks people in a prison of rigidly prescribed behaviors and attitudes that engender discrimination and prejudice toward non-believers. "Every religion," as Sigmund Freud once wrote, "is a religion of love for those it embraces, and each is disposed towards cruelty and intolerance against those who do not belong to it."<sup>162</sup>

Religion tells man that there is an unseen order that is the order of all orders, or the order of the master of the universe, and that adjusting to that order and behaving according to its rules will make man happy and content. But "the means to realize such things as happiness are irrational in that there is no scientific basis of producing what is promised through prayer and ritual."<sup>163</sup> A belief in fate, which religion tends to emphasize, is an acceptance of domination by and subordination to certain invisible forces whose very existence and design diminish humanity and appropriate its future. Belief in fate makes man less free, less creative, and less able to think and act to shape his destinies; it crushes the power of imagination and leads him to accept subordination to others who represent and speak in the name of religion and God.

Men and women of religion are often led to judge non-believers harshly, impose stagnation on themselves and on all other peoples under their control, and forego liberating knowledge. "God in his overweening love for man," wrote Charles Van Doren, "is destructive of man's creative energy."<sup>164</sup> He limits our ability to think creatively and tolerate cultural and religious diversity. Faith, in fact, cannot be accomplished without the blind acceptance of certain mysteries,

claimed miracles, and myths that cannot be demonstrated as facts or truths; the word of religious leaders, which defies both reality and logic, has to be accepted as the truth. And while religion in general permits, and sometimes even invites, people to negotiate with God, God's self-appointed representatives on earth usually refuse to be questioned.

Religions in general, and the monotheistic ones in particular, are dedicated to life after death more than to life before death. They promise heaven to true believers and are committed to helping all believers get to heaven. Because of that promise and commitment, religious institutions tend to be preoccupied with the task of explaining the road to heaven. Believers are usually asked to obey God, follow the teachings of their religious leaders, and perform noble tasks that have little to do with enhancing the material, cultural, or intellectual quality of their lives. But to care less about life on earth for the sake of a life beyond it is to ignore life's complexity and many of its requirements and challenges.

Promising everything later and almost nothing today absolves religious ideologies and religious leaders of their responsibilities on earth. Acceptance of after-death rewards that cannot be guaranteed for mortgaging the present enslaves people, while guaranteeing the success of an ideological leadership that cannot be held accountable for any problem or wrongdoing. Religion, therefore, cannot fail; it can continue forever to make claims that cannot be proven and promises that cannot be tested. In the process, it makes the committed of the believers unable to relate to reality, because to do so means to sacrifice faith for the sake of science and rational thinking.

The advancement of science, technology and reason since the fifteenth century has led to the demystification of many things that were once spiritual and sacred, and thus created an ideological vacuum. This vacuum facilitated the spread of new social and philosophical ideas such as nationalism, democracy, and communism. Yet despite these developments, the ultimate questions regarding the meaning of life and death have remained unanswered, enabling religion to

continue to play a role as a social institution and a cultural core with enough appeal to claim the allegiance of billions of people everywhere.

People who are still socially and economically underdeveloped have become more dependent on and, at the same time, more estranged from the more developed people. This estrangement, in turn, has caused the less developed people in general to become more suspicious and insecure. To deal with their insecurities and preserve traditional identities, they began to resort to conservatism and ideology, particularly religion and cultural nationalism. Consequently, ideology seem to have developed two lives, one in the industrial societies, where it is dying of old age and irrelevance, and the other in the traditional and agricultural societies, where it is being revived, activated and pushed to extremes.

Since religion grew out of a deeply felt need of the agricultural society of the distant past and adapted itself to the life of the agricultural civilization, traditional religion is expected to meet the same fate of the civilization that produced it. As agriculture is transformed and the logic of its history is terminated, its culture and way of life will be transformed as well. For religion to survive, it has to be transformed to reflect the needs of the new civilization. Otherwise, it will become a fighting force impeding social transformation, and thus an obstacle to both material and non-material progress. "The part of religion in the transformation is the most important element concerned. Religion has often been, and is still often, an impediment rather than an encouragement to independent inquiry."<sup>165</sup>

While developments since the Renaissance have continued to weaken the logic and appeal of religion, economic globalization and information dissemination since the 1970s have weakened the power and influence of nationalism. But in the wake of the collapse of communism, the failure of Third World socialism, and the end of the Cold War, both religion and nationalism reemerged as powerful social forces. Peoples, especially minorities, that had lived under communism for generations, and others who had led a backward life under

authoritarian Third World rulers for decades, saw in both ideologies their lost opportunity.

Nationalism is reemerging as a conceptual socio-political idea to strengthen the unity of minorities and to help them attain political independence. Religion, on the other hand, is reemerging as a spiritual force and a cultural tool to give meaning to the lives of the poor, the oppressed, and the knowledge have-nots who are losing the race in the new age. Since history is irreversible, neither can a transformed religious institution reclaim long lost political power, nor can a much-weakened nation-state recover newly lost economic power; therefore, the revival of both ideologies will be temporary. Nonetheless, the revival of religion, nationalism, and cultural particularism is likely to cause many poorer nations and minorities to be trapped into a cycle of violence and self-destruction for a long time to come. The power of ideology, in fact, has always been a function of its political utility rather than its accuracy, humanity, or ability to predict the future.

Scientific research and philosophical inquiry, by their very nature, tend to challenge the conventional wisdom and refute accepted myths and mysteries. Because of that role, they cannot advance or even survive in a society burdened by ideology and lacks freedom. Moreover, economies cannot expand, diversify, or advance in the absence of profit and self-interest. A strong commitment to a higher cause and/or to an absolute political authority, which ideology demands, would interfere with the pursuit of self-interest, reducing economic activity to a largely zero-sum game where some people get richer at the expense of the many getting poorer. But placing self-interest, not collective interest, at the center of human activity causes the individual, not society, to become the primary target of such activity; this is a sad but unavoidable development that needs to be addressed seriously. However, placing self-interest first makes life today, as opposed to a life of the past or to the afterlife, the primary beneficiary of human activity. Total commitment to a religious or national cause is no longer compatible with free economic activity, political and intellectual freedom, or technological and scientific inquiry.

Ideology, moreover, being rigid and dogmatic in nature, is incapable of practicing the art of politics, which is pragmatic. And since we live in a dynamic world where reality is changing every day in front of our own eyes, thinking in purely abstract terms inspired by ideology causes politics to lose touch with reality. Politics can only maintain this view at the expense of freedom and increased contact with the world of knowledge.

Social systems, regardless of their ideological nature and socio-political objectives, are creatures of societal processes that are themselves both products and agents of their times. As times change, social systems change as well. In fact, all systems have a life of their own that can be short, long, stagnant, dynamic, dull, or interesting, but never perpetual. Change, being the only unchangeable fact of life, causes all systems to reach sooner rather than later their limits, forcing them to restructure or be replaced; alterations may be sufficient in the short run, but total restructuring or replacement is inevitable in the long run. Even universal principles and absolute values, such as justice and beauty, cannot maintain universal applicability and continued utility over time without change; they will have to undergo changes to make them more relevant to changed circumstances, times, and cultures, and more responsive to continuously changing human needs, tastes and perceptions.

In addition, the introduction of new ideologies and the revival of old ones usually create radical mass movements to effect change and permit certain individuals to dominate society. This in turn creates superleaders, national heroes, or holy men, and consequently widens the gap between those at the top of the political or religious ladder and the rest of the population. In the process, new relationships are created that reduce the humanity of everyone involved. Those at the top of the ladder tend to develop a sense of superiority and divine inspiration that causes them to lose touch with reality and drives them to denigrate the value of the lives of those at the bottom. But sadly enough, most of those at the bottom of the socio-political ladder tend to feel that their lives are only worth what they can do in the service of their

leaders. The bulk of the masses are thus led to accept the unacceptable like death for the sake of mysterious causes, and to believe in the unbelievable like unproven miracles. Critics and free thinkers, meanwhile, are treated as liabilities whose elimination is necessary to maintaining ideological purity, unchallenged validity and strong commitment by the masses.

When people are helplessly attempting to deal with the unknown, understand the invisible, and rationalize the irrational, they are most vulnerable to the work of magic, the seduction of myth, and the false promise of ideology. But when people are in control of their life conditions, they are more aware of their surroundings and less vulnerable to outside forces. They are able to deal with the irrational, appreciate the invisible, and plan for the unknown without mortgaging their future. Wherever ideology dominates, people lack the freedom to think and develop their potentialities; they are encouraged, often made, to remain uniformed. They tend to develop a consciousness unrelated to reality and a mindless mind. Ignorance and helplessness, therefore, nurture ideology, and ideology perpetuates ignorance and helplessness.

Centuries ago, changes in the state of mind inspired by new ideas represented great motivational forces that united people and shaped nations. Religion and nationalism were probably the most effective of all such ideas. But by uniting individuals and tribes to create nations, and by strengthening the cultural ties that bind them together, nationalism and religion widened the gaps that separated nations and accentuated real and perceived differences among them, causing countless ethnic, religious and interstate conflict. Globalism, in contrast, is gradually erasing the old political and ideological divides; it ties individuals, rather than states or nations, across national lines and cultural divides together, creating a new reality that reduces the causes of conflict and causes convictions to change. George F. Kennan remarked recently that the "ideologies of the early decades of [the twentieth] century have today, in any case, largely lost their reality. The extensive breakdown of the class structures of society that played so large a part in their origins

has deprived them of much of their meaning. The fact is that we live, at the moment, in an un-ideological age.”<sup>166</sup>

Again, when life is largely static, convictions can and often do change conditions, although such change is modest and primarily spiritual and behavioral. But when life is generally dynamic, conditions can and often do change convictions. In the new age of knowledge, where change is continuous and dynamic, conditions are destined to shape and reshape convictions without interruption. Consequently, ideology and its absolute values and belief systems are destined to change and, in the process, are certain to end the reign of terror of ideological leadership.

# Chapter Eight

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## Geopolitical Change

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Geopolitical changes are developments that affect the behavior of nations and states, their global positions, and their management of relationships with others. Such developments include large migrations of people, ethnic and cultural conflicts, wars and invasions, large investment and capital movements, environmental and human rights concerns, terrorism, the spread of unconventional weapons, and new strategies to deal with such issues. The people most involved in shaping geopolitical developments include economic, political, and media elites, leaders of religious, cultural and ethnic communities, leaders of labor and trade unions and nongovernmental organizations, and managers of transnational corporations.

In the pre-agricultural age, war among neighboring tribes and drastic changes in weather were the only major recurring developments that affected people and impacted their lives. After the development of agriculture, a much different society and a more advanced civilization slowly emerged that shared almost nothing with the tribal one. The agricultural civilization, its way of life, and its state system were possible because agriculture was able to produce a surplus of food. The surplus allowed populations to grow, division of labor to be born, trade to be expanded, and states and armies to be built. States whose people were more productive and resourceful were able to build

stronger armies, become more culturally sophisticated, and expand influence beyond their borders. "Wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth."<sup>167</sup> Yet geopolitical developments at the end of the twentieth century seem to indicate that military power may no longer be needed to acquire national wealth, and that its ability to protect wealth may be diminishing.

The age of agriculture witnessed important political, ideological and technological developments, some of which had a long-lasting impact on the lives of people and the structure of society. Great powers and great religions appeared, and important technologies were discovered and developed. Technological developments were instrumental in raising the productivity of agriculture, thus allowing individuals and communities to have more time to think, learn, and increase their wealth and power. Technological developments also played an important, at times an indispensable, role in facilitating trade, the expansion of states, and the building of empires.

Religion and its ideological zeal also played important roles in community and state life throughout the agricultural age. Religion induced its followers to behave differently and thus strengthened the core of culture and the role culture played in holding members of society together. Religions also instigated wars, caused conflict, and justified the oppression and even the killing of followers of other religions. In fact, some of the most brutal and destructive wars in history were carried out in the name of religion and under the pretext of "saving" people. "Under the urge to heroism and the commitment to the elevation of humankind often lies something truly grotesque—the impulse to destroy our fellow human beings."<sup>168</sup> When idealism is carried to its extremes, it usually becomes fanaticism.

States and empires that appeared in older times and are commonly recognized by historians as being great, such as the Roman and Islamic empires, shared certain general characteristics. Noted among such characteristics are the following:

1. They had strong and efficient central governments capable of keeping order and maintaining control.
2. They had larger populations, larger economies, and more efficient armies capable of regional expansion and the acquisition and protection of state wealth.
3. They were, at the time of their greatness, relatively more sophisticated culturally and advanced technologically than neighboring states.
4. They had a unique religion supported and/or adopted by the state and its rulers.

The history of the age of agriculture witnessed enormous human migrations. They were migrations caused primarily by war, famine, and population growth, which in turn affected the formation and dissolution of many states and empires. Major conflicts were almost always internal and regional, leading to the making and remaking of empires. Geopolitical change was primarily regional, not global, until the advent and expansion of Islam in the seventh century. The Islamic State was the first empire to come close to having a global impact and thus to precipitating geopolitical developments of a global magnitude. Because of its widespread influence and cultural and scientific achievements, the Islamic empire carried the flag of the civilization of its times and was recognized as a great civilization for several centuries. Yet despite its greatness, the Islamic empire was unable to maintain its global position. The numerous internal conflicts it faced, and the many wars it had to fight were instrumental in weakening it and ultimately causing its disintegration. No empire, probably with the exception of China, was able to resurrect itself after its disintegration and reunite its people and territory.

At the end of the European Middle Ages, trade began to expand rather rapidly and global geopolitical change occurred frequently. Smaller nations like Portugal and the Netherlands emerged as global commercial powers, while much larger and older nations like China and India lost power and significance. Scientific discoveries and technologies related to sea navigation and the production of modern

weapons were the primary forces behind all major geopolitical changes at the time. The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century made military power a function of both economics and technology, while making the nation-state and its pursuit of economic wealth the main forces responsible for geopolitical change.

Despite the emergence of several great powers since the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifteenth century, no truly global order was established until the middle of the twentieth century. Lack of modern transportation and communications systems hindered the ability of any empire to project global power. Wars causing untold destruction to people and property and the threat of war, particularly in Europe, characterized the world's states of political and socioeconomic affairs for more than five centuries prior to the establishment of the first global order in the wake of World War II.

The Soviet Union emerged at the end of that war as a world power with a strong ideology around which a new society was developed and a new empire was established. To counter the weight of the Soviet Union and contain its ideological threat, the United States initiated a policy of helping its allies and former enemies, including Japan, economically and militarily. It created NATO as a military alliance to deter the Soviets and contain their military threat on the one hand, and launched the Marshall Plan to help its NATO partners rebuild their devastated economies on the other. Since each of the two superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, was militarily capable of destroying the other, a "cold" war began, replacing the older forms of war; and a true world order based on a balance of power was established. It lasted until the end of the 1980s.

### **The Cold War**

The two superpowers emerged at the end of World War II not only as two antagonistic military powers, but also as leaders of two ideological camps, with incompatible socioeconomic and political systems. While the American way of life was based on capitalism and democracy,

the Soviet way of life was based on socialism and totalitarianism. To defend its way of life and pursue its ideological goals, each superpower tried to convince its followers, with considerable success, that its system negated the other, and that coexistence between the two systems was not possible. The NATO allies, feeling superior and rather threatened, committed themselves and a great deal of their resources to preserving the status quo and defending most real and perceived Western interests at all costs. In contrast, the Marxist system emerged as a challenger that threatened to undermine and change the status quo. And because Marxism was born as a progressive idea to end real and perceived social ills caused by capitalism and colonialism, it was viewed and promoted by its followers as a revolutionary, anti-establishment idea. Adherents of communism presented their views as the wave of the future, while presenting socialism as the movement to end economic exploitation, colonialism, and social degradation, and free humanity from the grips of capitalism.

As it called for revolutionary change, Soviet communism began to adopt an offensive strategy and employ certain political and military tactics to weaken the status quo around the globe. Such policies and tactics called for helping communist parties everywhere and supporting all Third World national liberation movements. Nations placed within the West's sphere of influence were particularly targeted and encouraged to revolt against Western hegemony and reject its values and way of life. The West, in contrast, was forced by this circumstance to adopt a largely defensive strategy to protect its way of life, its interests and its allies. This strategy dictated, among other things, the development of certain military plans and the establishment of foreign aid programs to contain communism, discredit its pronouncements, and weaken its general appeal. Third World nations were pressured to oppose communism and facilitate the Western fight against the Soviet Union and its Marxist ideology.

Within this dynamic, the Soviet Union assumed the role of an instigator whose job was to promote ideological change and incite violence to achieve it. The United States, on the other hand, assumed the role of

an international policeman whose job was to keep law and order, foil Soviet attempts, and suppress calls for change around the globe, even when change was sought to deal with issues of self-determination, the elimination of corruption, and human rights. Both superpowers, moreover, were forced to perceive every change in the Third World as a geopolitical change that demanded swift and decisive action.

Consequently, the Soviet-American ideological and political conflict was expanded to include most nations of the world, causing Third World countries in general to become objects of contention and little else. And in order to avoid direct military confrontation, both superpowers moved to freeze regional conflicts like the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to transform several Third World countries into battle zones to settle disputes and foster their respective geopolitical interests. In the process, most Third World nations were made to pay a heavy price in human terms and lost economic opportunities for a war they had nothing to do with or gain from.

At the same time, however, the post-World War II era witnessed a strong commitment by the then newly established United Nations organization to help all Third World nations achieve freedom, economic development, and independence. And because the idea of national self-determination was accepted as one of the pillars of the UN charter, the Third World movement toward political and economic independence seemed unstoppable. In addition, U.S.-Soviet rivalry to expand political influence on the one hand, and Western Europe's inclination to free itself of the curse of colonialism on the other served to enable many Third World nations to gain substantial political, economic, and military backing to achieve national goals.

The same period also witnessed the advancement of the objectives of both capitalism and communism. Under capitalism, the U.S. economy flourished, while the devastated economies of Western Europe and Japan were rebuilt. And under communism, the economies of the Soviet Union and its European allies achieved a speedy recovery. Progress in the Soviet Union was made particularly in areas related to industrialization, scientific research and technological development,

and universal education. And despite severe ideological conflicts and the eruption of several civil and regional wars outside of Europe, the world as a whole managed to avoid the catastrophe of another global war, giving Europe in particular its longest period of peace and tranquility ever.

In light of these largely positive developments, the 1960s witnessed the evolution of an international sense of optimism and high expectations. A new “era of rising expectations” emerged, giving almost all people of the world, regardless of ideology, a strong feeling that they were on the right path to a more promising future. Yet this optimism was more an expression of hope, than a reflection of reality, as most nations would later discover.

### **Rising Expectations**

During eras of rising expectations, the mood in society is generally upbeat, the outlook optimistic. Opportunities are not only abundant, but also growing and enticing. People normally expect more, obtain more, and demand still more, as if no end to human need and ambition exists. Active individuals and groups tend to be restless, impatient, and constantly on the move.

The post-World War II era of rising expectations began in the 1950s, accelerated in the 1960s and lasted, wherever it prevailed, for about 25 years. For example, it began in the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1950s and ended around the middle of the 1970s. In Western Europe, it began in the late 1950s and early 1960s and ended in the early 1980s. In Japan, it began around the middle of the 1960s and ended in the early 1990s. In the oil-producing countries of the Third World, it began in the late 1950s and ended in the early 1980s. In the Asian Tigers, it began around the middle of the 1970s, as it was ending in most other parts of the world, and ended in the late 1990s.

During this era, people in the West in general experienced higher wages and salaries, lower unemployment rates, and increasing fringe and social benefits. Standards of living rose sharply, public services

improved substantially, and work and educational opportunities expanded rapidly. Business entrepreneurs and managers were constantly on the move, exploring new fields, initiating new ventures, developing new ideas and careers, and expanding industrial and communications technologies. Meanwhile, the middle class grew fast in size as well as in political power, enabling democracy to flourish. "This era, stretching back to the late 1940s and forward to the mid-1960s, was the era that created the first mass middle class in the world."<sup>169</sup>

In the communist countries, remarkable achievements in space and military technology created a new sense of pride and confidence. Revolutions and military coups to effect change in the Third World were encouraged, and economic and military aid to allies and sympathizers was extended. The ideas of socialism, economic planning, and state control of the media were advanced by the Soviet Union as the long-awaited alternatives to capitalism and its evolutionary process of economic development and free press.

During the 1960s and early 1970s most Third World nations, despite wide spread poverty and economic underdevelopment, experienced higher economic growth rates, better education and health care services, and substantially improved standards of living. Foreign aid provided by the United States, the Soviet Union, and several Western European states were helpful in improving life conditions in general. Exploitation of natural resources, and better economic management served also to improve economic performance and increase national incomes. Meanwhile, prices of several raw materials exported by Third World nations, such as oil, silver, coffee, and other agricultural products, rose substantially, increasing national incomes and fostering self-confidence. As a result, nationalism, political independence, economic independence, and cultural renewal became magic words, motivating the masses to work harder and exhibit a mood of optimism and rising expectations.

But in their search for the ultimate goal that was never to be found, individuals, corporations and even states failed to see most problems

that were being created and mistakes that were being made. And since no economic expansion could be sustained forever, and no system could maintain validity and efficiency for a long time without restructuring, the late 1970s and early 1980s exposed the shortcomings of capitalism, communism, and Third World nationalism and state capitalism. While the Soviets failed to inspire the world to change according to communism's prescription, socialism faced a drastic decline in appeal at home and abroad due primarily to its economic failure and lack of freedoms. Likewise, the Americans failed to solve their increasing social problems and reshape the world in their own image. "The 1970s," wrote Charles William Maynes in 1990, "were a difficult decade for the United States, and the 1980s were difficult for the Soviet Union. Each superpower has emerged from its decade of trial somewhat chastened. Both the American and the Soviet people have to come to terms with their own limitations. Each understands that as great as its power may be, in different ways each is failing in other critical areas."<sup>170</sup>

The policy of East-West antagonism and ideological conflict had negative, at times disastrous, implications almost everywhere.

Building huge armies, large nuclear capabilities, and elaborate security apparatuses was meant to protect a way of life, defend allies, and intimidate the enemy. But in the process both superpowers acquired a new sense of greatness that overshadowed a deeper sense of vulnerability. While more resources were devoted to enhancing military capability and to projecting political influence around the globe, less energies were devoted to reducing international tension, improving mutual understanding, and addressing the ever-increasing social problems at home. Nonetheless, East-West antagonism and superpower military buildup were instrumental in creating a balance of power, which, in turn, helped to freeze most regional conflicts and prevent the escalation of those that threatened superpower confrontation. In addition, an obsession with security matters served to impair the ability of both the superpowers and Third World dictatorships to develop realistic national and international perspectives and ethical standards of state behavior. Consequently, some nations were denied legitimate

political rights, while other states were permitted to violate international law and abuse the rights of their citizens with almost total impunity.

The expectations that were fuelled by both capitalism and communism were eventually shattered and, consequently, the era of rising expectations came to an end, bringing in its wake a less promising era of "diminishing expectations." Yet the eventual collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which ended the Cold War, gave capitalism and its promoters a golden opportunity to claim victory and feel vindicated, despite mounting social problems at home and deepened poverty and conflict abroad. By the mid-1990s, the United States entered a new era of rising expectations, to be followed by Western Europe a few years later.

The end of the Cold War caused the end of the "balance of power" both as a strategic concept and as a reality of superpower relationship. Yet, instead of announcing the end of the balance of power relationships, some Western political and security analysts began to reinvent the concept anew, investing time, money and people's emotions to cultivate new enemies and articulate new conceptions that could justify, and even glorify, hatred. Promoters of the new conception seem to be saying that a "balance of hate" has always existed between the "civilized" West and the "barbarians" of the East, and that such a balance shall govern nation relationships in the future.<sup>171</sup>

### **Diminishing Expectations**

At the end of the 1970s, it became apparent that capitalism, particularly in the United States, was unable to eliminate poverty and crime at home despite its magnificent achievements in the fields of economics, food production, medicine, security, and communications. At the same time, communism appeared unwilling to give its people the political freedom and openness it had promised, despite its remarkable success in building a powerful military force and security apparatus and regardless of the absence of serious external threats. Third World

nationalism and socialism, meanwhile, were being proven incapable of eliminating economic, cultural, educational or technological dependency, providing freedom and political stability, or even reducing corruption, social injustice and income disparities in a meaningful way. The failure of capitalism to prevent recurring economic recessions and inflation, the failure of communism to close the technological and economic gaps that separated the East from the West, and the failure of almost all Third World states to extend the success of political independence to the sphere of economics have exposed the limits of the world's predominant sociopolitical ideologies.

Examples of other setbacks suffered by the superpowers and other regional powers can be found on the battlegrounds. The United States' successful assertions of military power in Korea and the Dominican Republic in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, were followed by a humiliating defeat in Vietnam in the early 1970s. The Soviet's spectacular shows of military might and tactical organization in impeding the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian liberation movements in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, were followed in the 1980s by a show of military impotency and organizational failure in Afghanistan. The Israeli army, which needed only six days to defeat the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967, failed to subjugate tiny Lebanon in 1982. And instead of eliminating the Palestinian enemy in Lebanon, the Israeli invasion caused the creation of a more threatening enemy, the Party of God, which forced Israel to acknowledge defeat and withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. Even North Vietnam, which managed to defeat the forces of the French Empire and the military machine of the American superpower in the 1950s and 1970s, respectively, also failed to subjugate Cambodia after several years of military occupation. These were developments that exposed the limits and utility of military power as a way of achieving strategic goals.

Another major development that contributed to this state of diminishing expectations was the energy crisis of the 1970s, which served to emphasize the reality of international political and economic interdependence, and highlight the vulnerability of the rich and powerful

nations to disruptions of oil supplies. Oil disruptions and higher oil prices made the rich and powerful nations realize that they were no longer able to control world events, and that many of their national goals may actually be beyond reach.

But as the mood of diminishing expectations was spreading, two great revolutions were taking place and changing reality. These were the communications and information revolutions, which made the movement of people, goods, ideas, money, and knowledge across national borders easier and much faster than ever before. The information and communications revolutions, furthermore, enabled people everywhere to become more familiar with the living conditions and ways of life in most other countries of the world, while at the same time making them aware of the shortcomings of the competing socio-economic and political systems. The world's rich, as a result, are able to see on television and, at times, to experience through travel the tragic conditions of the world's poor. In turn, the world's poor have come to realize that material poverty does not alone define human misery. Awareness of the problems of homelessness, drug addiction, crime, alcoholism, and lack of care and compassion for the poor and the elderly in most rich and not-so-rich countries living under both capitalism and socialism made the poor of the Third World feel less unfortunate than before.

Poverty and military dictatorship, political repression and instability in the Third World; a culture of crime and drug addiction, moral decay and social inequality, homelessness and a disintegrating family in the West; political corruption, lack of freedom and alcoholism in the East have combined to render Third World socialism, Western capitalism, and Soviet communism less appealing than before. Dissatisfaction with the prevailing systems on the one hand, and lack of credible alternatives on the other led people in most parts of the world to expect less in the future and convinced them to accept less as inevitable.

In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union, described the situation in his country at the end of the 1970s: "A breach had formed between word and deed, which bred public passivity and

disbelief in the slogans being proclaimed. It was only natural that this situation resulted in a credibility gap. Working people were justly indignant of people who, enjoying trust and respectability, abused power, suppressed criticism, made fortunes, and in some cases, even became accomplices in—if not organizers of—criminal acts. Alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime were growing.<sup>172</sup> When Gorbachev talked about a credibility gap, alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime, he sounded like many of America's conservative politicians. And when he spoke about corruption, suppression of criticism, and abuse of power by public officials, he sounded like Third World intellectuals. Many social and political problems that were perceived in the past as only afflicting certain societies suddenly emerged as common societal ills, regardless of ideology, political system, or economic achievements.

In times of social stress and loss of communal direction, people usually become more conservative, more protective of their cultural values, more inward looking, and more content. Traditional ways of thinking and age-old institutions gain renewed legitimacy, assuming a leading role in debating the present and shaping the future. Religion and the moral values it normally espouses become a major source of individual solace and communal inspiration. Conservatism becomes a sociopolitical ideology aimed at preserving cultural traditions and building a new future based on a vision of a fading yet comfortable and revered past. Resorting to religion and invoking socio-cultural particularism are actions meant to preserve one's political and cultural identity in the face of social stress and uncertainty. Yet the sought-after traditions are nothing more than values, attitudes, customs, and institutions whose limits have long been exposed and recognized.

Whereas the mass psychology of the 1960s was one of rising expectations almost everywhere, the mid-1970s heralded the creeping advance of a new era distinguished by a mood of diminishing expectations. This era is "a historical period characterized by a general human presentment that the future does not promise as much as the recent past did, and a resigned acceptance of the less that is expected to come."<sup>173</sup> For example, a general mood of resignation served to

enable conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic to retain power in the 1980s with little difficulty, despite the fact that about 8 million people in the United States and over 20 million people in Europe were unemployed. Meanwhile, the previously uninterrupted stream of revolutions and coupes in the Third World stopped almost completely. People, who opted for change in the 1960s despite increasing prosperity, opted for continuity in the 1980s despite relative poverty.

During eras of rising expectations people tend to be more focused on opportunities that are created and to ignore the vulnerabilities and problems that emerge. Measures needed to deal with these problems are usually met with stiff resistance because they dampen expectations and reduce optimism. The bankruptcies of many Internet companies in the United States in 2000 provide a good example of how heightened optimism about the future of the Internet had hindered the ability of both the management and investors to see the underlying weaknesses inherent in each new industry. Issues and problems of importance, thus remain unattended until societies are overtaken by crisis. By comparison, during eras of diminishing expectations people tend to acknowledge the existence of problems and vulnerabilities but overlook potential opportunities. Consequently, measures needed to deal with the problems are viewed as bitter medicine that must be taken. Opportunities, meanwhile, are viewed as risky endeavors and unwelcome changes and thus tend to be ignored.

In the first era of rising expectations, the poor suffer most, the knowledgeable gain the most, and those in the middle are modestly rewarded. In the second era, the knowledgeable gain almost everything, the poor get more misery, and those in the middle pay most of the price. As a result, the ranks of the poor grow and the middle class shrinks in size and wealth; the latter has to work much harder to stay in place, while the rich get richer and more powerful. In fact, this era of diminishing expectations witnessed the weakening of the middle class in the West and its near demise in most Third World countries such as Egypt, Argentina and Indonesia.

### The Post-Cold War Era

Since the 1970s, the world has witnessed several important geopolitical developments, the magnitude and implications of which are yet to be fully recognized and evaluated. They are developments of a dynamic nature whose impact is uncertain and whose movement is not easily traceable. The end of the Cold War, while obscuring the real causes of some developments, has in fact defined the path of others. The important geopolitical developments since the 1970s include the following:

1. **The Exposure of the Limits of Military Power:** The defeats suffered by some of the leading military powers of the world, including the two superpowers, have demonstrated a substantial reduction in the utility of raw military power as a tool of political domination and economic control. In addition, several other developments have robbed military power of its essential elements of success:
  - A. Democratic states are no longer able to launch surprise attacks without having to explain reasons, debate goals, and offer alternative plans before approval by representatives of usually divided and skeptical publics.
  - B. War syndromes suffered by Americans, Russians, and Israelis after their Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Lebanon wars, respectively, and a declining allegiance to the nation-state in general have made people less enthusiastic about fighting, more likely to oppose war, and increasingly more interested in dialogue and peace.
  - C. The difficulty of ending wars and the high cost of managing their aftermath seem to have made “winning the peace” often more difficult and costlier than winning the war, as the NATO allies involvement in the former Yugoslavia have demonstrated in the 1990s.
  - D. Economic globalization has tied together all centers of commerce, finance, and investment, giving the most

knowledgeable and the best prepared nations and corporations the opportunity to achieve objectives without war. It made it also difficult, even counterproductive, for governments to use military power to control economics.

2. **The Spread of Democracy and Human Rights:** Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism, the West declared victory, which served indirectly to validate its economic claims, cultural values and political system. Capitalism and democracy, as a result, emerged as the only viable alternative to communism, particularly in light of the utter failure of Third World socialism. In addition, the economic and political success of the United States and other Western nations despite the communist challenge made capitalism and democracy appear as inseparable twins. In fact, most intellectuals of the Third World and the formerly communist countries seem to have concluded that economic development is not possible in the absence of democracy. Meanwhile, human rights organizations and environmental movements around the world were being slowly empowered even in the repressive states, which furthered civil society and made it easier for democracy to be accepted, at least in principle, everywhere.
3. **The Spread of Ethnic Conflict:** The numerous nationalities that communism subjugated and controlled for decades felt liberated at the end of the Cold War. Other nationalities the nation-state system had tried to incorporate with little success found the opportunity with the spread of democracy and human rights to reclaim lost political rights and long-suppressed socio-cultural identities. The number of nationalities who live as minorities and believe that the UN charter gives them the right to self-determination is estimated to be around 6,000. "The world is made up of many more nations than there are states. Few states control territories that locate a single people within their borders and nowhere else."<sup>174</sup> Available statistics indicate that probably no more than nine percent of all states in the world have

populations that could be considered homogeneous, with no substantial ethnic or cultural minorities requiring special attention or non-conventional political arrangements. If only three percent of the estimated 6,000 national minorities succeed in achieving independence within the coming 20 years, the number of UN member states would double. In fact, due to the revival of ethno-nationalism on the one hand, and the recognition of peoples' right to self-determination on the other, the number of independent European states during the first five years following the collapse of the Soviet Union increased by about one-third.

4. **Economic Integration and Political Separation:** Ethno-national conflicts, as explained, are causing the political and social fragmentation of states along socio-cultural lines. At the same time, the successful economic experience of the European Community, which led to the creation of the European Union, is encouraging more states to form cooperative regional economic arrangements in Asia, North America, and Latin America. While economic integration strengthens links between political and economic elites, it undermines the meaning of political borders and national sovereignty. Transnational corporations are slowly emerging as powerful forces controlling the flow of investment capital and impacting national policies and economic conditions everywhere. Economic integration is fast becoming a new unifying force that ties together peoples and interests rather than ideologies or states in a web of cooperative and competitive arrangements that are complementary rather than contradictory. "The economic reach of capital is immeasurably larger than the political reach of the national entities from which it emanates. The accumulation of capital takes place on an international scale that lifts it above the nation-state in which it locates its operating units."<sup>175</sup> The 350 largest corporations in the world had, by the end of the twentieth century, a combined gross income of about one-half of the gross income of all of the industrial countries,

exceeding by far the combined gross national incomes of all other states in the world. The market value of Microsoft, for example, is more than half the gross national products of all Middle Eastern countries.

Occupied nations and national minorities view political separation as a goal to preserve national heritage, revive older cultures, enhance cultural particularism and attain independence. As such, they reject established political borders and seek to replace them with borders that define smaller entities. Economic integration, on the other hand, has emerged as a futuristic framework to consolidate fragmented economic resources and form larger, more competitive regional economic entities. As such, it seeks to abolish established economic borders and render existing political borders meaningless. Overall, while political borders are still holding firm in most parts of the world and new ones are being built, economic borders are fast disappearing. Cultural borders, meanwhile, are being redefined to accommodate the needs of ethnic and religious minorities and global elites.

5. **Emergence of the Trading State:** Japan and the other four industrialized Asian entities, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, have transformed the foundations of international relations. They are nations whose relations with other countries are based largely on trade rather than on political, cultural, or security issues. They are creating a "trading state" that is more dynamic and competitive than the traditional nationalist state. And unlike the older one, the new state seeks economic advantage based on trade in manufactured goods and services and gives little consideration to establishing cultural links with its trading partners. While the nationalist state had always relied on politics and military power to extend or maintain its global reach, the trading state is relying largely on its economic management, technological knowledge, and marketing skills to achieve the same objectives. Other Asian states that began to industrialize in the late 1980s seem to be following the same

economic philosophy. If this trend continues as expected, it will lead to defining national security issues more in economic terms and less in military ones, and to enabling trade and commerce to shape political borders more than national borders shape commerce and trade. It will also induce states to employ the financial, economic and informational resources at hand to achieve political and security objectives that only military power could achieve in the past.

6. **Declining Importance of Land:** The advancement of military systems and equipment, particularly long-range missiles, military planes, smart bombs, and communications and command and control systems, as well as weapons of mass destruction have made the waging of effective wars possible with little contact with the enemy. The Gulf War launched by the United States and its Western and Arab allies against Iraq in 1990 achieved its objective of driving Iraqi forces out of Kuwait before a single soldier of the Allied forces entered Kuwait. And while the material cost of the war was somewhat high, its human cost was very low, although the death of one person in war should be considered one death too many. And while Iraq was under attack, its military was able to send mid-range missiles over Jordan to hit Israeli targets. As evidenced during the Gulf War, the value of land as a strategic military asset has been vastly reduced, thereby reducing the need to maintain foreign military bases and mercenary states. This development has also eliminated the need to occupy the lands of other peoples for either defensive or offensive purposes.
7. **Loss of Third World Strategic Importance:** The end of the Cold War on the one hand, and the decline of the strategic importance of land and many other natural resources on the other have rendered almost all Third World countries strategically unimportant. The disappearance of East-West rivalry ended the superpower's competition to lure Third World nations into opposing camps and solicit their participation in the Cold War's ideological and military campaigns. Knowledge, which has

become not only the most important factor of production but also a good substitute for other factors, continues to weaken Third World sources of economic strength and thus deny most Third World nations of whatever advantages they may have had in the past. Oil-exporting countries are the only exception. Furthermore, Third World debt and political and economic corruption have undermined the credibility and sovereignty of all indebted states. Economic restructuring imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on many countries have made most Third World states less independent, less free, and more dependent on the industrialized countries and the international financial institutions for economic and technical aid. "Though they may claim to be independent and legally are so, modern weapons, technology, economics and communications make small states more dependent on large ones than ever before."<sup>176</sup>

8. **Changing Nature of Terrorism:** The West's tendency to oppose the objectives of national liberation movements on the one hand, and the Soviet Union's tendency to support them on the other, made terrorism in the 1970s an international phenomenon. Sophisticated military equipment and devices that could be easily carried and hidden were instrumental in helping terrorists and revolutionaries alike to strike at military and civilian targets. At the same time, disenchantment with capitalism in the West, and an active anti-war movement fueled by the Vietnam War provided a certain degree of sympathy to those who portrayed themselves as revolutionaries but used terrorism as a means to publicize their causes and fight their legitimate enemies. Around the mid-1980s, terrorism began to decline and change its nature as well as its targets. The failure of revolutionaries to deliver on their promises in almost every country that was liberated through revolutionary means, the end of the Vietnam War, the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan, and a mood of conservatism in an era of diminished expectations led

to a decline in the appeal of both terrorism and national revolutions. Meanwhile, international media dominated by the West was able to change the image of nationalist revolutionaries from freedom fighters to pure terrorists, causing them to lose the public sympathy they had enjoyed a decade earlier in many parts of the world. And while revolutionaries were losing sympathy, the situations they sought to change were getting more complicated and thus more difficult to transform. This was the result of certain national and international developments, notable among which are the following:

- A. The application of pressure by the West on Third World states to fight terrorism and condemn terrorist acts emanating from their regions or carried out by their nationals.
- B. The involvement of the UN in the fight against terrorism and the application of economic sanctions against states accused of sponsoring terrorism such as Libya and Afghanistan.
- C. The emergence of a world public opinion opposed to terrorism in general and more involved in denying it the tacit support it needed to function.
- D. The success of the state in almost all Third World countries in controlling dissent and fighting its domestic enemies. The building of state institutions, particularly a modern bureaucracy, an army, a police force, and an effective secret service apparatus made the accomplishment of these objectives possible.

In the 1990s, particularly after the end of the Cold War, terrorism abated and was transformed from a largely international phenomenon into a particularly national one targeting the nation-state, its symbols, and certain groups perceived to be responsible for the grievances of the terrorists. Algeria, India, Sri Lanka and several Latin American countries clearly demonstrate the changing nature of terrorism from an international phenomenon to a national problem. In fact, by the end of the twentieth century, international terrorism seems to have been reduced to the work of one single organization, the Qaeda, which is led by Osama Bin Ladin and operates from Afghanistan, probably the

most isolated country in the world. Since it is not expected that many national and cultural minorities, such as the Kurds in Turkey and the Moslems in the Philippines, will achieve their national objective soon, national terrorism will continue. Furthermore, the fragmentation of societies along socio-cultural lines and deepening poverty are expected to make this problem even more prevalent. The U.S. federal authorities reported more than 2,600 acts of terrorism in the United States in 1996 alone, most of which, however, were minor ones. The angry class discussed in Chapter Three, with its culture that respects no ethical codes and recognizes no rules, will continue to express its anger through terrorist acts. Laws defending civil liberties will make the fight against domestic terrorism in all democracies more sensitive and rather difficult.

**9. Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism:** Islamic fundamentalism is as old as Islam itself. Throughout Islamic history, fundamentalism had been activated by what was perceived as the loosening of ethical values and the deviation of rulers from true Islamic law. In doing so, it has tended to resent social change inspired by alien ideas and to oppose governments that failed to hold Islam in high esteem. The revival of Islamic fundamentalism, which began in the nineteenth century, has passed through three stages. The first stage ended in the early decades of the twentieth century and was led by Islamic thinkers, like Jamal al-Din Al-afghani (1839-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), who understood the European challenge that Muslim societies faced. They warned of cultural domination by an imperialist Europe and called for political, economic and educational reforms and Islamic solidarity. In short, they called for building modern societies and states along Western lines but according to Islamic law. The second stage was dominated by Western educated reformers like Taha Husayn (1889-1973) who advocated the adoption of certain Western social and economic models as a basis for changing the then existing social, political, and economic orders in the Islamic and Arabic world. The borrowing from

Europe, they claimed, "was necessitated by considerations of power, first in terms of military organizations and later in terms of administrative and political reforms. These were, in large part, measures of self defense which were considered compatible with both Islamic law and the interests of the community."<sup>177</sup> The third stage began in the late 1960s in response to the failure of the ideas and ideals of the nationalist movement and its nation-state. Other forces that contributed to the activation of Islamic fundamentalism included continued military, cultural, and economic dependence on the West, the corrupting impact of oil wealth on Islamic societies, and Israeli occupation of Arab lands and Islamic holy places in Jerusalem. As a result, Islamic forces armed with old convictions moved to change the existing situation, a change they could not hope to accomplish without challenging the state and its main institutions. Meanwhile, the state throughout the Islamic and Arab world, instead of accepting the challenge and reforming its institutions, moved to delegitimize the Islamic political movement and employ the much hated secret service to suppress dissent, thereby causing a militant backlash.

The new Islamic fundamentalist movement that became active in the 1960s and beyond, therefore, was largely anti-establishment and anti-modernization, not anti-West. Egypt, Syria and Algeria provide good examples that make this point clear. But the West's extreme and largely unjustified fear of Islamic fundamentalism led Western states in general to back most regimes in the Arab and Islamic world despite their utter failure, unacceptable human rights records, and political corruption. Consequently, the radical Islamic elements concluded that their enemy was not only the dictatorial regimes that oppressed them but the Western backers of those regimes as well. Nonetheless, they continued to focus on their own governments and attack foreign targets only when these targets stood in their way or appeared vulnerable.

To understand the dynamics of this movement and evaluate its potential threat, one must be familiar with European history after the Renaissance and during the religious wars of the Protestant Reformation. Today, Islamic and Arab countries in general are passing through the same transitional period from the age of agriculture to the age of industry, from pure faith and fate to science and reason as the period in Europe after the Renaissance. And, as explained throughout this book, societies living in an earlier stage of civilizational development can neither challenge another society living in a more advanced stage, nor can they be independent of these societies. Therefore, Islamic fundamentalism does not pose a serious threat to the West; it does, however, pose a short-term problem that requires sensitivity and understanding.

10. **Rise of China:** China's size and its potential power and certain regional claims make its rapid economic growth a geopolitical phenomenon of strategic importance. "When China was poor and introverted, it posed little threat to anyone but its own people. Now its expanding economy gives it more weight and the means to strengthen its military,"<sup>178</sup> writes Robert Samuelson. Regaining control of Hong Kong in 1997 has given China added access to and more intimate knowledge of advanced technologies and sophisticated entrepreneurial skills, as well as a great financial and marketing center. Expanding its political control to include Taiwan, which the Chinese leadership hopes to do, would multiply access to entrepreneurial and marketing skills. However, using military force to occupy Taiwan would hurt China's image and relationships with other nations, and thus its economic prospects. The Chinese leadership that dared to deviate from communism in favor of capitalism in the 1980s is more likely to be flexible in giving up some of its territorial claims for the sake of expanding its economic strength. It is a leadership that seems to realize that rigid ideology and aggressive behavior produce nothing except enmity, and that the unprecedented

economic achievements it recently accomplished were made possible because of its willingness to play by most international rules whose violation carries a heavy price. During a visit to the United States in 1999, the Chinese prime minister gave a speech at MIT in which he highlighted American-Chinese economic relations and the mutual benefits to both countries. And while imploring the U.S. government to lift restrictions on China's access to advanced American technology, he ignored all ideological and political issues as if nothing besides economics really matters any more. The audience, it was reported on the radio, applauded in agreement. Since economic growth in China is uneven and the majority of its population still lives in poverty, China needs, at current economic growth rates, between 20 to 30 years to lift most of its poor out of poverty and build a truly modern infrastructure. But as it builds and modernizes, economic prosperity expands, and more people become free and independent. Many Western-educated people will assume leadership roles, interest groups will be formed, the economic process will be strengthened, and sub-cultures will appear, creating a pluralistic society. Meanwhile, the ideological leadership that both helped shape and was shaped by the Cold War will disappear. China being an integral part of the global economy, will make the Chinese leadership part of a global elite that is more interested in cooperation and economic advantage than in competition and war. Chinese society, meanwhile, will have become fragmented, with little power in the hands of the nationalistic class to contemplate waging war. "The 1990s saw a real end to the wars of [the twentieth] century. And with that came fatigue, exhaustion and malaise...and loss of heroism. The romance of struggle is done."<sup>179</sup> Values and ideologies for which people fought and died are dying; interests and pleasures for which people live and strive are blossoming.

The changes identified and briefly discussed in this chapter are profound social, economic, and political transformations on a global level.

They affect the way national societies are organized, the role of the state in society, and how states view themselves and others and conduct business with them. They are strong signs that the world is entering a new transitional period with its own forces of change, of which the Internet is only one. As Peter Drucker says, "The explosive emergence of the Internet...is profoundly changing economies, markets, and industry structures; products and services and their flow; consumer segmentation, consumer values, and consumer behavior; jobs and labor markets. But the impact may be even greater on societies and politics and, above all, on the way we see the world and ourselves in it."<sup>180</sup>

Societies in general are losing their organizing principles and with them the organizing principles of their foreign policy. While societies are being divided along socio-cultural lines that are largely need-related and value-oriented, individuals, elites, and corporations are linking together along interest-oriented lines. A new world is slowly emerging where interests and economic advantage count more than values and political identities. In fact, national politics are fast becoming the politics of subcultures and special interest groups, while international politics are becoming the politics of economics, knowledge, environment and human rights.

All of the issues related to national security, national interest, national sovereignty, national power, national industries, and national politics are being quietly redefined and placed in a global context. A giant state like Russia, for example, despite having inherited a huge military arsenal and advanced technological and scientific knowledge, was reduced in the 1990s to a giant ghost of a sick superpower. Lack of social cohesion, a much-weakened economy, and a corrupt, inefficient bureaucracy have left Russia devoid of real power to wage war or even to enforce the peace. While Russia still has the capacity to strike fear in the hearts of its enemies, the magnitude of its threat will depend greatly on how it is perceived and treated by the West in a world where power relationships and the nature of power itself are constantly changing.

The internationalization of the world's financial and investment markets and the continued mergers and consolidations of the world's major industries have substantially weakened the nation-state's economic power and its control over its national economy. "[J]ust as the trillion-dollar-a-day market for foreign exchange effectively places the valuation of any nation's currency at the pleasure of the market rather than the discretion of its monetary authorities, a similar unification of economic production would mean an unprecedented diminution in the capability of any individual nation-state to seek an economic destiny that departs in any substantial measure from that of its political rivals."<sup>181</sup>

Moreover, political separation, social fragmentation, and the growing influence of non-governmental organizations, including special interests groups, have weakened central authority in society and confused the nation-state, causing it to lose much of its confidence and sense of purpose. Chester A. Crocker, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the United States, wrote recently that "not since the Napoleonic upheavals (if not the peace of Westphalia [in 1648]) have the rights of states, people, and governments been so unclear...what sovereign rights, if any, do governments have to prevent outsiders from telling them how to treat their people, their economies, and their environments? And what about the rights of outsiders to come to the aid of peoples victimized by actions or inactions of local governments?"<sup>182</sup>

All notions of establishing a new world order or reestablishing the old one are based largely on the idea of a balance of power among nations. Since all such notions assume that the nation-state is the unit of political analysis and the primary actor in the international arena, they have become unrealistic and destined to fail. They are political notions rooted in the past, rather than the future, and they therefore fail to comprehend the magnitude of global change and appreciate its consequences. For example, Paul Kennedy bases his analysis regarding the future upon the assumption that "the broad trends of the past

five centuries are likely to continue,"<sup>183</sup> when the whole logic of the recent past and its history has changed.

Kennedy's thinking, which reflects a wide consensus among most Western strategic thinkers, misrepresents reality, and therefore cannot produce anything but misconceptions of the future. The fact that humanity is entering a new civilizational era has not been acknowledged or understood by these thinkers. Since each civilization ends the history of its predecessor civilization and invalidates the historical logic that governed the movement of that civilization, trends of the past have become part of a largely irrelevant legacy. Globalization is the most fundamental geopolitical change witnessed by human history; understanding its forces and possible consequences is the most difficult challenge we face. Yet we have no choice but to face it and understand its logic.

## Chapter Nine

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### Democracy and Society

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Democracy is commonly defined as “a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people or in their elected agents under a free electoral system.”<sup>184</sup> In a more general sense, it is “a state of society characterized by formal equality of rights and privileges.”<sup>185</sup> In other words, democracy is a system of governance that regulates the relationship between the state and the public in a way that enables the governed to elect their governors and to participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives.

Democracy is not a stable and well-defined state of political affairs in society. It is rather an evolving sociopolitical process that affects and is affected by the dominant cultural values and attitudes in society. Since cultures are products of civilizations, the institutions of democracy are shaped by the historical experiences and changing socioeconomic circumstances that govern the development of civilizations. And because different societies have had different experiences and live under different economic and technological conditions, democracy usually expresses itself in varied forms and different political arrangements.

The origins of democracy and its basic principles of equality, justice, and accountability may be attributed to organized religion. Since its inception in ancient times, religion has declared that every person must answer to a higher authority. The three monotheistic religions—

Judaism, Christianity and Islam—state that no one is exempt from the commandments of God and that all people are equal in his presence. These principles led eventually to ameliorating the status of slaves, at least in the eye of God, and to undermining the rationale for absolutism of temporal authority.

Yet despite these seemingly democratic principles, the kings and emperors of ancient times were, ironically, able to rule with absolute authority. To legitimize absolutism, they embraced religion and claimed to be either gods or directly related to gods, or gods' representatives authorized to rule in their names. By so doing, the kings, rulers, and emperors of ancient times were also able to use religion as a tool to unify people, consolidate power, and establish dynasties.

Democracy as a political system has certainly had its share of successes and failures. Its greatest success has been in its ability to transform itself into a socio-cultural value or an attitude that governs individual and group relationships in democratic societies. In the industrialized nations of the West in particular, democracy has become a mindset that induces people to accept others as equals, respect their rights, and resolve conflict with them peacefully. Democracy, therefore, entails more than participation in the political process to ensure equality of opportunity; it serves also as a cultural value that seeks to establish the principle of mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, the democratic experience shows that the elite who are politically influential, wealthy and media savvy are able to gain more power and use it to claim special rights and privileges unavailable to the general public. Elites are even able to use their powers to deny some people many of the opportunities to which they are entitled in a democratic society.

Democracy, both as a political system and a cultural value, has succeeded in all industrialized societies; it has also failed in all pre-industrial societies, with the exception of India, where democracy has continued to struggle without much success or failure. For example, despite the emergence of extreme nationalistic ideologies in certain

industrialized countries such as Germany and Italy, democracy has survived and gradually flourished in both countries.

### Democracy and Tolerance

“There is no democracy without democrats, that is without a specifically democratic man that desires and shapes democracy even as he is shaped by it.”<sup>186</sup> But in order to nurture the development of democrats, certain conditions must exist; people ought to be able to understand the value and promise of democracy, which they cannot understand without education and without a culture of tolerance. Yet no society or culture can be called tolerant or intolerant without much reservation and qualification; each society tolerates certain things, resists others, and discriminates between many more.

For example, Western societies in general are more tolerant of political dissent and uncommon social behavior than others are, but less tolerant of racial and cultural diversity. In contrast, Arab societies in general tend to be more tolerant of racial and cultural diversity, but have almost no tolerance for political and ideological dissent and place little value on political dialogue.<sup>187</sup> However, no society or culture has arrived at its current state of tolerance or intolerance without passing through difficult times and experiencing painful changes. Religious tolerance in the West, for example, was not possible before the Protestant Reformation, and democracy was unachievable before the Industrial Revolution and its mode of production. Lack of democracy as a political system and lack of support for it as a socio-cultural value in most Third World societies must therefore be linked to the absence of both religious reform and industrial social formations. A society where ideology dominates culturally, where it rules politically, and where economic activities are largely agricultural and limited in scope can neither nurture true tolerance nor produce genuine democracy.

For a people to be tolerant, they have to accept the right of others to be different. They also have to act on the understanding that their own beliefs and values are an expression of their own choices, not of an

ideology based on faith and fate that others must follow. In addition, they must understand that their attitudes are expressions of a reality that changes as economic conditions and interests change, rather than some deeply rooted cultural traditions and religious beliefs that do not change. Societies that believe that their attitudes are expressions of religious or socio-political ideologies tend to have little or no tolerance. Since ideologies, by their very nature, tend to claim that they, and no one else, own the truth, they represent a formidable obstacle to socio-cultural transformation and thus to both tolerance and democracy. In fact, ideologies almost always cause people to become more rigid and narrow-minded, and thus less free, less tolerant, and more willing to accept non-democratic rule.

In Europe, the development of city life during the Renaissance was largely responsible for activating the economic process that led to new social formations different from those prevailing in rural areas at the time. People in the larger trading cities were usually occupied with commerce, crafts, finance, and other economic and non-economic activities that nurtured and supported a non-agricultural society. This led city people in general to become less religiously committed and more interested in material gain. Commerce, moreover, put city people in touch with other cultures, forcing them to become more tolerant and more willing to deal with and accept others.

Because of its Western origins, democracy as a political system and a cultural value has been only reluctantly embraced by some non-Western states, resisted by others, and publicly proclaimed but not practiced by many more. Most non-Western states tend to resist the idea that there can be universal principles for either popular political participation or human rights practices, claiming that such rights are a matter of culture, which is particular rather than universal.

### **Evolution of Democracy**

When nation-states began to emerge in Europe, their rulers were at odds with the Church, and therefore could not consolidate their own

political powers without the active support of the merchant class and the city-dwellers. While the rulers needed the financial support of the merchants, city dwellers were particularly interested in maintaining and protecting their social and political freedoms, for which most of them had paid a heavy price under the feudal system. And while both parties were cooperating to achieve shared goals, new ideas and changing economic life conditions posed a challenge to both the theocratic state and the nation-state. "This challenge was first felt most poignantly by the Church, to the benefit of the new nation-states. But it would not be long before the despotic monarchies that had replaced the earlier communes would also lose their power, beset and overthrown by the new image of man, and not God, as residing at the center of things."<sup>188</sup>

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, slums emerged in industrial cities to house the poverty-stricken and badly exploited workers, while capitalists were accumulating wealth and living in affluence. Within a century, a new society with a new culture gradually emerged in all industrialized countries; it had three distinct social classes, each of which was based more on interests and shared concerns than on values and traditions: a working class, a middle class, and a capitalist or rich class. While the relationships between these classes were generally more conflictual than cooperative, all classes were interested in maintaining and expanding political and economic liberty. To protect this liberty and institutionalize its practice, all classes accepted political plurality and participated in the development of democracy and its institutions. Economic liberty, therefore, served as a catalyst for the development of both capitalism and political liberty, which grew together and eventually became mutually reinforcing.

The intellectual origins of modern democracy are to be found in the political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the West. The leading political thinkers of the time emphasized the responsibility of governments to protect individual rights against the state, capital, and the encroachment of religion. The separation of religion and state in the middle of the seventeenth century had led to the

recognition that individuals have rights, while raising concerns that the state might confiscate such rights. The idea was to limit government intervention in people's lives, particularly in their pursuit of happiness. The government was also happy to see people concentrate on material gain rather than on religion, which still represented a threat to the secular state. But when the state tried later to reclaim the powers of the church and curtail the freedoms acquired by people, it was faced with popular uprisings, forcing it to retreat. Democracy, supported by a vibrant middle class and a productive capitalist system, continued to make progress and gain more legitimacy well into the twentieth century.

In the wake of the dramatic ending of the Cold War, democracy and capitalism emerged as the most promising political and economic systems if not the only acceptable and legitimate ones. They appealed to the great majority of people everywhere, and particularly to those who lived the longest and suffered the most under the rule of authoritarian communist regimes. The infomedia process, moreover, has helped people become more aware of the promise of both democracy and capitalism and, thus, has instigated the largest and widest international wave of democracy and respect for human rights. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, almost every state in the world is either a legitimate democracy, is democratizing, or claims to have established democratic principles. This signals the triumph of the democratic idea over competing ideas.

However, authoritarian rulers, autocrats, and hard-core ideologues are resisting the new changes, particularly the political ones, and accepting only cosmetic changes that lack substance. The acceptance of certain democratic changes is driven by a desperate need to revive stagnating national economies, not by any newly found belief in human dignity and individual freedom. Such rulers hope that economic restructuring will enable capitalism to deliver on its promise before political reforms take root and institute effective democracy in society. But no economic restructuring can produce real economic

growth without socio-cultural restructuring, and no social transformation can take place without economic development.

Today, nations that are industrialized or industrializing are either democratic or democratizing; nations that are agricultural or living in the pre-industrial age are either authoritarian or largely undemocratic. Societies that live in the industrial and post-industrial age are either non-ideological or moving away from ideology; societies that live in the pre-industrial age are either ideological, experiencing a revival of ideology, or still attached to certain outdated ideological notions.

### **Capitalism and Democracy**

The Renaissance was an era of fundamental change; it paved the way for the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial age. It was an era of trade expansion, economic diversity, great geographical discoveries, religious reform, political restructuring, and important scientific discoveries and technological innovations. Kings and princes during that era were interested in consolidating their political power, while traders and city dwellers were interested in protecting their freedoms and economic interests. As a result, the representatives of the forces of the political and economic processes at the time joined hands to fight and defeat the Church and its political authority and economic doctrine. Since the new state could no longer claim or wish to claim a religious mandate, it had to have the implicit, if not the explicit, consent of its citizens to gain legitimacy and rule.

Therefore, the interest of the merchant class in economic freedom, the interest of city dwellers in political and social freedom, and the interest of rulers in building nation-states and national economies combined to lay the foundations for both capitalism and democracy. Describing such dynamics of change, Paul Kennedy wrote, "There exists a dynamic for change, driven chiefly by economic and technological developments which then impact upon social structures, political systems, military power and the position of individual states and empires."<sup>189</sup>

Yet, despite this convergence of factors, the gradual emergence of a conscious middle class in the nineteenth century was probably the most significant development as far as both democracy and capitalism were concerned. It became the social class most responsible for industrial diversification, for advancing and protecting democracy, and for developing and fostering a national culture. While capitalism provided the middle class with the economic opportunity to grow, democracy provided it with an effective tool to advance its political interests.

The development and control of a national economy were meant to provide the state with the resources it needed to build and maintain an army, to finance its many activities, to promote its culture, and to please and appease its citizens. But the capitalist system that eventually emerged proved to be beyond state's control. Capitalism, by its very nature, is driven by self-interest, not national interest, and is guided by certain powerful market forces that seem to be elusive and protective of their independence. "Capitalism is a process of creative destruction," wrote Lester Thurow.<sup>190</sup>

As noted earlier, the relationship between the political and economic processes moved slowly from a state of cooperation to a state of competition. It was not long before the economic process was able to achieve societal eminence, using deeds rather than words and employing money and the media in the process. Money, without which neither the state nor politics could function properly, was used effectively to manipulate and at times buy politicians, making elections an unequal contest between those who have money and others who do not. The triumph of economics over politics was thus a significant setback for democracy as well as for both the political and socio-cultural processes.

While politics was losing its objectivity due to the influence of money, the state was losing its ability to care for or even define the common good. At the same time, the public, particularly the middle class, was losing its sovereignty; it could no longer resist the temptations of the new luxuries of life and thus avoid debt and manipulation by the economic and infomedia processes. This, in turn, served to further weaken democracy and its institutions. "One of the few historical

rules of Marxism that remains viable to this day is that there can be no democracy without a bourgeoisie. The middle class is the bulwark, the base for genuine democracy."<sup>191</sup>

The media, supposedly a tool to inform and educate the public, became in the second half of the twentieth century an investment opportunity possessing great economic, political, and socio-cultural potential. After having been transformed into large business concerns, media organizations began to emerge as an influential societal process. Today, the mass media is able through a selective process to inform and misinform the public, creating new attitudes, remolding public opinion, and, perhaps unintentionally, deepening the socio-cultural divides in society. Since the middle class was and still is the major source of demand for most products, its independence and confidence suffered while its class-consciousness was being distorted.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, which witnessed the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Marxist socialist system posed a serious challenge to capitalism; it compelled the Western democratic state to raise taxes, design and implement new programs to protect the public, empower workers, and create a welfare state to help the poor, the unemployed, and the elderly. Both the upper class and the middle class provided, rather willingly, the money needed to finance the welfare state because they feared socialism, its premise of class conflict, and its promise of a classless society.

Decades later, neither group was willing to continue to finance mushrooming welfare programs. While the financial price was increasing without an end in sight, communism was failing and no longer feared. In order to accomplish their objectives of lowering taxes and reducing spending on social programs, the upper and, to some extent the middle, classes began to call for less state intervention in public life, a smaller government, and more restrictions on immigration. Money and the media were used as tools to manipulate public opinion, distort elections, and pressure both the executive and legislative branches of government to accommodate their demands.

The 1980s witnessed the triumph of the ideas that the upper and middle classes promoted not only in the United States under Ronald Reagan but also in Britain and Germany under Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl, respectively. A “culture of contentment” soon emerged to tie the wealthy, the media barons and managers, most members of the middle class, and the comfortable among the retired elderly. It is the culture, as John Kenneth Galbraith argues, of a new, loosely connected group of unequals sharing an interest in preserving the status quo and ignoring the poor, the common good, and the future for the sake of the present.<sup>192</sup>

Under the influence of capitalism, and because of pressure applied by special interest groups on behalf of the rich, the Western welfare state began to retreat. Social responsibility toward the poor and the elderly, and even the community at large, began to lose its appeal. Poverty and all of the social ills associated with it, particularly crime, drug use, homelessness, and violence began to spread slowly and become endemic. “The fortunate and the favored, it is more than evident, do not contemplate and respond to their own longer-run well being. Rather, they respond, and powerfully, to immediate comfort and contentment. This is the controlling mood.”<sup>193</sup>

In the 1950s, the capitalist economic process, while competing fiercely with the political process to gain independence, urged governments to give special attention to the needs and desires of its elite. One of capitalism’s stern advocates at the time, American banker J. P. Morgan, said in testimony before a Senate subcommittee, “If you destroy the leisure class you destroy civilization.” Morgan defined the leisure class as “all those who can afford to hire a maid.”<sup>194</sup> By the end of the 1980s, the leisure class had triumphed, and the gap that separated it from the rest of society had become not only socioeconomic but socio-cultural as well.

The triumph of economics over politics made the political process a mere tool in the service of the economic elite. Democracy, consequently, lost its ability to do the things it was supposed to do; it lost its vision as well as its mission. Decades ago, Walter Lippman said, “In

the cold light of experience, he [the private citizen] knows that his sovereignty is a fiction. He reigns in theory, but in fact he does not reign. Contemplating himself and his actual accomplishments in public affairs, contrasting the influence he exerts with the influence he is supposed to exert according to democratic theory, he must say of his sovereignty what Bismark said of Napoleon III, at distance it is something, but close to it, it is nothing at all."<sup>195</sup>

In the United States of America, the bastion of democracy, the democratic process became a passionate pastime game suited more to entertaining people than to effecting change. In this game, which could be likened to a basketball game, the number of privileged players is small, while the number of interested spectators is large. A small number of those spectators make up the cheerleading squad, whose members perform to entertain the public and excite the players, but go home at the end of the day with nothing to show for their effort and time. To ensure performance, the players are managed by a professional group of political coaches and media specialists, whose talents and services are sold to the highest bidder. Former U.S. President Gerald Ford described American politics as "candidates without ideas, hiring consultants without convictions to run campaigns without content."<sup>196</sup>

All of the players engaged in this rough political game are handsomely rewarded and promoted by the media regardless of the outcome. The more infamous a player is, the more famous he or she is likely to become, because infamy is no longer a stigma that calls for exclusion, but rather a business opportunity to be exploited by both the infome-dia and economic processes. Players, coaches, and managers who fail to perform to owners' expectations are easily discarded; a few lucky ones, however, are usually recycled.

During the heat of the game, the players usually fight hard to win; the coaches and managers sweat to keep their jobs by keeping their players in contention; and while the players enjoy the glory, the owners collect the prize. The public, on the other hand, is divided between those who pay to attend, cheer and jeer and get emotionally involved

in a game that has little lasting impact on their lives, and those who watch the game on TV or choose to ignore it altogether. Yet the entire public, regardless of its involvement, ends up paying the price for enriching the players and the owners, for making many of the infamous famous, and for enabling the capitalist economic process to become more dominating and ruthless.

While the economic process has gained almost total control of the political one, the infomedia process, as explained in Chapter Four, has virtually assumed the role of the traditional political party in democratic society, rendering all political parties less relevant and less influential than ever before. Money buys access and access gains influence and influence changes reality to suit money's desires. "As the political parties have sunk into a state of virtual political irrelevance, journalists have become the new bosses of presidential politics. They are the power brokers and character cops who dominate the process of identifying, advancing and publicizing the people who would lead the nation,"<sup>197</sup> wrote Richard Harwood. Since the media, or, to be more exact, what is called the "national media," is made up of a small number of large corporations dedicated first and foremost to making money, the media tends to promote its favorite candidates and undermine their opponents.

Even freedom of speech in the United States today is practically non-existent, it is limited to those who own a media establishment and those who manage it for them. People who do not own a newspaper, magazine, or a radio or television station have almost no freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is not only the freedom to say what you think privately, but also to say it publicly via a medium that enables ideas and opinions to reach their targeted audience, which only the media can facilitate but rarely allows to happen. The Internet is the only possible medium that might challenge the media and provide a popular venue for the free expression of opinions. However, it still has a long way to go and many battles to win.

Working together, the economic and infomedia processes are able today to shape public opinion, prioritize national issues, and determine the outcome of elections even before the public goes to the polls.

As Charles Lewis writes, "The wealthiest interests bankroll and, in effect, help pre-elect the specific major candidates months and months before a single vote is cast anywhere. We the people have become a mere afterthought of those we put in office."<sup>198</sup>

The most damaging impact of the merger of capitalism with the media is seen in the relentless campaign of the new alliance to subordinate human behavior and ethical values to the economic imperative of money making and wealth accumulation. People's fears, instincts, desires, and even evil tendencies are awakened to create new needs; excitement is heightened and envy is provoked to exploit and make more money. People who enjoy success and have wealth are right; people who experience the pain of failure and suffer poverty are wrong. "In post-democratic America, we understand that the rich are rich, and therefore good; the poor are poor, and therefore bad."<sup>199</sup> No one asks or even seems to feel an obligation to ask how money was made and how ethical were the means used to accumulate it. Consequently, a new subculture emerged where greed is considered good, and where wealth is considered the primary if not the only criterion to measure success.

In addition to undermining democracy, largely unregulated capitalism and the mass media have had other negative effects. The negatives include the creation of an almost insurmountable income gap between the rich and the poor, the waste of nonrenewable resources, socio-cultural segmentation, and environmental damage. Negatives also include the enabling of money and the media to set new standards for what is moral and what is not, what is a fair game and what is not, and what success means and what failure entails.

Nevertheless, the capitalist democratic process has produced positive results that, in fact, outweigh the negatives. These positives include unprecedented economic growth, tolerance and cultural diversity, tremendous scientific and technological progress, social and political freedom, high standards of living, and vast improvements in the general quality of life.

### **The Nation-State, Ethnicity and Democracy**

The nation-state, driven by a mercantilist economic philosophy and an ambitious political leadership, fast developed an aggressive attitude. The crystallization of nationalism as a socio-political ideology served to strengthen internal unity and give the nation a clear objective and a feeling of superiority. Soon after the emergence of the nation-state in Europe, almost all states adopted policies of territorial expansion and economic mercantilism. The new policies were intended to enlarge the state and exploit foreign markets and resources and were often justified as defensive measures to contain the enemy, undermine his power base, and realize the potential of the nation. Consequently, political and economic competition between the major European states ensued and paved the way for colonialism. And because most such states had superior war machines, they were able to directly or indirectly control and dominate most lands and peoples in the world. Moreover, to tighten control over their colonies and facilitate exploitation, every colonial power adopted a policy of "divide and rule." While such a policy served the interests of the colonialist state well, it was a cause for planting the seeds of numerous, often bloody ethnic conflicts and civil wars that were to follow.

The political settlements that concluded the two world wars in 1918 and 1945 respectively, added another dimension to the causes of conflict. Political maps, which were drawn at the end of each war, were tailored to reward the victors, appease the powerful, and punish the losers. Little or no considerations were given to history, geography, culture, tribal ties, economics, or even human rights. The state, which emerged from this process, tended to control territories on which more than one ethnic, religious, national or cultural minority lived. Today, all states, rich and poor, capitalist and non-capitalist, democratic and non-democratic, are governed by either one ethnic or one cultural group or by a socio-political elite that neither represents all of the people nor treats them equally and fairly. "No government represents all

of its citizens or seeks the welfare of all its individual constituents with the same degree of diligence and commitment.”<sup>200</sup>

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the Western democratic states in general and the United States in particular incorporated “human rights” as a component of their foreign policies. The international economic and financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were instructed to tie financial aid to Third World nations and former communist states to those states’ human rights records as well as to the proper management of their national economies. In addition, pressure was applied on most states to adopt democracy and carry out free elections. These were important developments with far reaching consequences, noted among them:

1. Economic restructuring caused the socioeconomic gap between the rich and the poor to widen, helped integrate the most advanced sector of each state’s national economy into the global economy; it also served to weaken each state’s control of its economy and consequently its ability to manage its own economic resources to achieve national goals.
2. Political liberty encouraged dissent and forced the state to defend its past and current human rights record, also emboldened ethnic and national minorities, encouraging them to seek political and cultural recognition.
3. The activation of the socio-cultural process led to encouraging the masses to protest the new economic restructuring measures; it also served to weaken the state and undermine its self-confidence.

Democracy as a political system is based on the principle of “one man one vote.” In multiethnic societies, such a principle can only serve to facilitate majority domination of minorities. “To abandon all constraints on direct democracy is to submit minorities to the tyranny of the majority.”<sup>201</sup> In societies where tolerance is either weak or hardly exists, an ethnic majority rule is more likely to lead to discrimination, oppression, and sometimes to “ethnic cleansing” as well. Bogdan Denitch, speaking about the tragedy of former Yugoslavia, said: “Nationalism is utterly

undemocratic although populist, and it is not open to the compromises and negotiations that are the heart of modern democratic politics. In an era of awakened nationalism in multiethnic societies democracy is the first casualty."<sup>202</sup> In addition, special interest groups have used democracy as a framework to pursue interests that differ from and oftentimes collide with the public interest. "Democracy, meaning majority government, is proving to be corrupt when pressure groups exert a greater influence than the electorate."<sup>203</sup>

Western democracy in general and American democracy in particular, is a democracy at a crossroads; it faces many problems at home and struggles to retain relevance. One of the major problems it faces today is a loss of popular confidence in its ability to deliver on its promises. Such promises include equality of opportunity, social justice, true freedom of speech, and most importantly, a "fair game," that enables people to compete on an equal basis. Investment capital controlled by the economic process and its barons, and an ability to remold public opinion monopolized by an exclusive media elite, are gradually reducing the possibility that a fair game can be played in either politics or economics.

While democracy in the West, especially in the United States, seems to have reached its limits as a progressive political system, it is being promoted worldwide as the only force of real change. Nations that are being enticed or coerced to import Western democracy tend to have neither the culture of tolerance nor the understanding of the essence of democracy, nor its requirements and consequences. Because of its newly acquired shortcomings, Western democracy has become like an old airplane whose capacity to perform is doubtful, which makes its maintenance exceed its utility. Yet it is being exported using the carrot and stick to nations that do not know how to use it and cannot afford its maintenance cost.

Democracy is most effective and fairly progressive when stability and prosperity prevail, when the opposition consists mainly of political groups contending for power, where the influence of special interest groups is minimal, and where the society is largely homogenous. In

other situations, particularly in pre-industrial, multiethnic, multicultural societies, democracy is often ineffective and could even become counterproductive. If every ethnic, national and religious group is given the right to develop its own identity in accordance with the democratic principle and the right to self-determination, every group is more likely to seek a state of its own, causing the disintegration of most nation-states in the world. On the other hand, if the nation-state is allowed to maintain its internationally sanctioned prerogatives, no ethnic minority or oppressed nation will be able to attain its goals of political freedom and cultural recognition.

"After two centuries," wrote Arther Schlesinger, "nationalism remains the most vital political emotion in the world, far more vital than social ideologies such as communism or fascism or even democracy."<sup>204</sup> But nationalism is not only a sociopolitical force whose role is to effect change; it is also an instrument to create new nations. Its ability to evoke collective memories and awaken old hatreds makes it a powerful tool to revive, unify, and activate older nations and cultural communities, causing states to crumble and disintegrate.

The modern state, as mentioned earlier, claims absolute sovereignty over all territories and peoples under its control. Yet it has little or no constitutional provisions to respond positively to the legitimate needs of its national, religious and ethnic groups. In light of the spread of ethno-national conflict, it has become abundantly clear that both the structure and the prerogatives of the nation-state are in need of an overhaul. "The disorders in the entire international system," says Robert Pickus, "are many and profound; the structures of resolving them are obviously inadequate, and the failure to deal with them is disastrous."<sup>205</sup> Since Western democracy cannot deal with such disorders, there is a need for an alternative system, or at least for a modified version of the democratic one. The shared homeland concept provides a model to restructure the nation-state system and make democracy more responsive to the needs of Third World nations.

### **The Shared Homeland Model**

The basic provision of this model calls for political separation of ethnic groups along nationality lines, while maintaining economic and social unity within existing state lines. The model has four major components, the full implementation of which would create separate political entities but a unified economic and residential entity, as well as a collective security system.

According to the logic and propositions of this concept, national and ethnic groups that live as minorities, would be granted the right to create their own mini-states. However, as individuals, economic enterprises, and social organizations, they would remain united. National politics apart, all people belonging to all nationalities would become partners sharing a larger homeland where all of them live and enjoy the opportunities it has to offer. Regions claimed by national minorities and recognized as their historical homelands, would be allowed to declare independence and thus create new nation-states, or mini-states, as separate political entities. Yet all territories under the control of the central authority before the start of this process would be declared a shared homeland for all minorities and majorities alike.

In addition, in order to maintain the integrity of the shared homeland and minimize the threat of future conflict, a collective security system would be constructed and implemented, guaranteed, if necessary, by the UN and other great powers. As a result, each national group would gain a distinct political and cultural identity of its own, get an opportunity to live in peace, while having a homeland to enjoy and share with other national groups.

The newly acquired political identity would give members of each national group exclusive rights to participate in the politics of their own state, but no rights to participate in the national politics of other states. In other words, political choice for each national group would be limited to the borders of its own state, while economic choice and residential preference would be extended to include all territories within the outer borders of all states. Members of each national group

would acquire citizenship rights in their own state only but residency rights in all other states. Residency rights are defined as being equal to citizenship rights with one exception, participation in the national politics of other states.

Participation in local politics is a right that all majorities and minorities would enjoy without limits. This should address the need for self-rule that enclaves of minorities have been demanding in many countries such as Georgia, Russia, India, and several other states, and other enclaves that might arise as a result of implementing the shared homeland model. Full autonomy would be granted to minorities living within larger states, provided that such minorities make majorities within the enclaves in which they reside. This would also be accomplished without endangering the rights of enclave minorities who would continue to belong to the larger majority in the land. The provisions creating the shared homeland, therefore, would be made to supersede all other laws that would be enacted by individual states.

Thus, the creation of a shared homeland would serve to permit several political entities to coexist harmoniously within one homeland, while allowing people to preserve or reclaim their own separate national and cultural identities and sovereignties. In other words, peoples sharing a homeland would be permitted to belong to separate nation-states, while enjoying equal nonpolitical rights and privileges in all other states. As such, the shared homeland concept would serve to redefine the notion of national sovereignty, making it less ambitious and inclusive, and more accommodating and democratic, and thus more humane and respectful of people's wishes and historical rights.

The shared homeland model could also be used to facilitate the resolution of other types of conflict, particularly claims concerning disputed territories between two neighboring states. In such a case, the disputed region would be granted full autonomy or a mini-state status and declared a shared homeland for both peoples to enjoy, while maintaining existing political affiliation at the time. Consequently, citizens of both states who claim the disputed region as their historic homeland would acquire equal rights to live and work in that region,

political rights being the exception. This means that both groups would be treated equally under existing laws while maintaining their own nationalities according to citizenship affiliation. According to such an arrangement, the political affiliation of the disputed region would be preserved, while the homeland rights of the excluded national or ethnic group would be restored.

Examples where complicated conflicts and oppressed national and ethnic minorities could find the shared homeland concept helpful are to be found in most parts of the world, particularly in China, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Palestine, Serbia, Sudan, and the Soviet Union.

Based on the above, the shared homeland model would provide a practical solution to the nation-state's ethnic and nationality problem, helping it to deal effectively and humanely with its citizens and address the grievances of its many ethnic minorities. At the same time, it provides a new socio-political framework that makes most societies more homogenous while encouraging economic integration and cultural diversity. And that in turn would help people regain their dignity, enrich their lives, and facilitate the introduction of democracy while improving its chances of success. In fact, political plurality and respect for human rights should be advanced as conditions for and components of the shared homeland arrangements.<sup>206</sup>

### **The Future of Democracy**

The Western political experience seems to suggest that democracy as a political system has certain requirements to function properly and deliver on its promise:

1. The presence of a middle class large enough, confident enough, independent enough, and conscious enough to know its interests and protect them. "Only a middle class that is educated, capable of reflection, aware of its interests and tied to a productive process will foster truly serious participation," and thus democracy.<sup>207</sup> Alexander Campbell says: "A collectivity of economic

middle classes, sometimes overconfident, sometimes uneasy, but never reduced to despair, is the condition of democracy.”<sup>208</sup>

2. Political plurality that gives all citizens a real choice between competing parties and different philosophical outlooks and guarantees minority participation.
3. A free press that facilitates freedom of speech and plays an active, yet neutral role during elections and political campaigns.

Any discussion concerning the future of democracy will have to focus on the experience of the United States of America. Otherwise, no evaluation will be sufficient. The American democratic experience derives its importance from three essential factors:

1. Democracy as a political system was first established in the United States over two centuries ago.
2. The American society never lost faith in its democracy, and despite its apparent shortcomings, the democratic system functioned remarkably well for almost two hundred years without significant change.
3. The United States has been the undisputed political, economic and military leader of the democratic world for almost a century.

While the shortcomings of Western democracy have become many and evident, the most serious problem facing all democracies today is the gradual deterioration of the status and power of the middle class. As this problem continues to deepen, poverty, crime, homelessness, and drug addiction, especially among children, are on the rise. And what makes the situation even worse is the fact that governing is increasingly being monopolized by a small, self-centered, culturally homogeneous, and largely isolated class. And because this class uses money and the media to manipulate people and stay in power, it continues to lose people’s support. “The growth of democracy has seen a sharp decline in the legitimacy of representative government. The reputation of elected officials in general—and of legislative bodies in particular has rarely been lower than it is today,” wrote David S. Broder.<sup>209</sup> But regardless of the source and strength of legitimacy, history teaches us that no state could govern and enjoy the support of its

citizens for long without meeting their basic expectations, which seem to grow and change continuously. Because of these expectations, all democratic regimes have faced increased challenges from the inside.

Despite the tremendous power that the economic and infomedia processes have, and the many ways they could use their power to manipulate and influence people's values and attitudes, and even fortunes, they continue to function outside the domain of public oversight. "The large corporation," says Robert Kuttner, "remains practically accountable to no one."<sup>210</sup> This freedom of action, which these two processes enjoy, is what motivates them to promote American style democracy and capitalism. They do it not to achieve justice and guarantee equality of opportunity but to create the conditions most conducive to achieving their own objectives. In fact, while the economic elite continues to exploit the poor, squeeze the middle class, and pollute the environment, the media elite continues to manipulate the most vulnerable, especially the young and the uneducated people, and to pollute the social environment.

The middle classes in the democratic West in general and in the United States in particular have become like a runner who runs on a treadmill. He runs faster and faster just to stay in place and avoid falling off the track. But struggling to stay in place means becoming exhausted, weakened and dizzy, while others keep marching along, accumulating more wealth and gaining more power. The unfortunate of the middle classes who are particularly vulnerable because of their lack of knowledge, old age, poor health, or inadequate income, are failing the challenge; they are falling off the treadmill track and joining the growing ranks of the relatively poor.

The media, to justify corporate greed and lack of accountability, continues to blame the poor for their own poverty, as if discrimination does not exist or matter. Meanwhile, the economic process continues to emphasize the need to cut production cost to compete with foreign imports and companies, when most competition in reality takes place among American corporations. In fact, a substantial portion of all products imported in the United States today, are goods produced by

American-owned foreign operations, not by foreign-owned corporations. When this fact is taken into account, as it should be, the American trade deficit and the perceived threat it poses to the health of the American economy would become more fiction than fact.

One of the unexpected, yet far reaching developments of the age of knowledge is the increasing segmentation of each state's society into different groups along socio-cultural lines. Socio-cultural groups share more values and convictions than interests, and because of that, they include the rich, the poor, and many more in between. The religious right in America, for example, is such a group. Other minorities in the West, such as North Africans in France, Indians in Britain, Turks in Germany, and Koreans in the United States, are socio-cultural groups that include the rich and the poor of their own people. However, both the rich and the poor of these minorities share very little with the rich and poor of other minorities and majorities in the countries where they live. Democracy, which gave people the freedom to voice their differences on the one hand, and instant communications, which gave them the means to link together and develop particular identities on the other, has combined to make this unique development possible. "The digital revolution allows once-ignored and even shunned groups to become organized" and create particular communities of their own.<sup>211</sup>

Generally speaking, political plurality in Western democracies consists mainly of two political parties, or two blocks of similarly oriented parties. Since the early 1980s, however, members of the political elites leading all parties in all Western countries have been moving toward a middle point in their philosophical orientation. They have in fact become members of one socio-cultural group where common interests and a unique lifestyle unite them and color their views and, to a great extent, shape their attitudes toward others. The collapse of Communism, which caused the bankruptcy of socialist thinking on the one hand and the weakening of the middle class and labor unions on the other, have given political elites the opportunity to join ranks and rule unchallenged. Meanwhile, the practical appropriation of the role of the traditional political party by the media, and socio-cultural segmentation of society

have made it difficult to create a national consensus on any significant issue and compel change.

By the end of the twentieth century, political thinking in the United States had become generally totalitarian and particularly discriminatory. Politics had been brought under the control of one socio-cultural group made up of a small political elite, an increasingly powerful media elite, an established business elite, and a professional elite of lobbyists, image-makers, and political consultants. Members of this group are linked together through interests, social clubs, similar educational experiences, and almost identical outlooks. Since all members of the elite belong to the same subculture of the affluent, they can and do often move from one area of activity to another and from one end of the socio-political spectrum to the other with ease.

Social discrimination, the dominant form of discrimination decades ago, has effectively been replaced by economic and intellectual discrimination, vastly limiting the ability of outsiders to penetrate the ranks of the ruling elite through any of its components. Minority intellectuals, particularly those espousing different viewpoints, can hardly publish; and if they do publish, their work is rarely recognized. This again limits freedom of speech and perpetuates domination by the socio-cultural elite that values economic greed, sanctions political manipulation, and considers monopoly of power, distortion of facts, and deception acceptable means to maintain control and exclude the other.

Consequently, political plurality has become more of a historical phase that is ending; it is being replaced by socio-cultural plurality. The traditional political parties, as a result, are reduced to little more than a convenient framework to facilitate elite competition and cooperation. They are no longer political movements representing competing socio-political philosophies capable of giving the public real choices.

Moreover, the American election cycle mandates major elections every two years and sets neither time limits on political campaigns nor term limits for elected officials. The president of the republic is the only exception; he is allowed to serve two terms only for a maximum of eight years. Meanwhile, the ability of candidates to reach the targeted

public has become a function of the access they have or could have to the media, which causes the cost of campaigns to rise year after year. A senator interested in keeping his or her seat in Congress, for example, could not run a successful reelection campaign today with less than \$10 million. And that means that she or he had to raise a minimum of \$30,000 a week, 52 weeks a year for 6 consecutive years; or for his or her entire term in office. Senator Zell Miller wrote February 25, 2001, describing his feeling after a fundraising session, "I always left that room feeling like a cheap prostitute who had a busy day."<sup>212</sup>

A President needed to raise more than \$100 million during his four years in office to run a credible reelection campaign. The Washington Post reported October 19, 2000, "Political groups are on track to spend a record \$3 billion by Nov. 7 to influence the federal elections, an increase of 36 percent over the \$ 2.2 billion spent just four years ago."<sup>213</sup> Because of such financial requirements, elected officials are left with no real time to take care of the business they are supposedly elected to take care of; they also have to be all ears when big money contributors speak. "What could be more obscene than going to a fundraising breakfast with financial fat cats in the morning and then voting on a bankruptcy law that afternoon? It blurs every ethical line, yet it happens countless times every day in our nation's capital."<sup>214</sup>

Paul Kennedy argues that the United States is ill equipped to deal swiftly and decisively with changing world affairs. As for the reasons, Kennedy mentions the electoral system that seems to paralyze foreign policy decision-making every two years, the pressure applied by the numerous special interest groups that usually espouse different issues and seek competing goals, and a culture that tends to simplify vital yet complex international strategic issues.<sup>215</sup> Kennedy blames the promotion of such a culture on the mass media, which he correctly accuses of having little time and space for complex international issues; they, he claims, are more interested in making money than informing the public. It is a mass media, he asserts, "Whose *raison d'être* is chiefly to make money and secure audiences, and only secondary to inform."<sup>216</sup>

Third World nations are also experiencing social segmentation along socio-cultural lines. Even states that enjoyed racial and ethnic homogeneity for a long time, are witnessing the transformation of their socioeconomic classes into socio-cultural groups. Economic duality, religious revival, and exposure to the lifestyles and cultures of the affluent West have affected different segments of each Third World society differently, causing them to be divided into socio-cultural groups that have little in common. In addition, being largely agricultural, Third World societies are yet to have a true middle class that is aware of its social status and can develop class-consciousness. The only group of people that come close to being considered a middle class from a socioeconomic viewpoint is government bureaucrats. But since these bureaucrats are employed by the state, they are totally dependent on it and thus lack the confidence and independence to protect whatever interests they may have.

In fact, no society living in the pre-industrial civilization has enough diversified economic activities, a relatively high standard of living, and adequate political and social liberty to produce a genuine middle class in society. As for political plurality, neither dictatorships nor theocracies, nor despotic rulers and regimes, nor multiethnic societies can produce or even deal with true political plurality. Dissent in such societies is considered an unacceptable attitude that defies traditionalism and undermines national unity.

In light of the developments and situations reviewed in this chapter, it is easy to conclude that the Western democratic system is no longer able to accomplish social justice and equality of opportunity. As explained earlier, systems in general, regardless of their nature and objectives, have lives of their own that sooner or later reach their ends. Such lives could be short, long, stagnant, dynamic, dull, or interesting, but never perpetual. All systems, as they approach their limits, come to be in need of restructuring or replacement. While modifications may be sufficient in the short run, restructuring or replacement is inevitable in the long run.

Today, democracy in the West in general and in the U.S. in particular has largely become a game played by the affluent for their own benefit and according to rules they have developed to exclude others. "The rich and comfortable have influence and money. And they vote. The concerned and the poor have numbers, but many of the poor, alas, do not vote. There is democracy, but in no slight measure, it is a democracy of the fortunate,"<sup>217</sup> wrote John Kenneth Galbraith.

Since the traditional middle class in the West is slowly but methodically being dismantled rather than strengthened, and because the political party is quickly losing its traditional role in society, the two pillars of democracy are crumbling and cannot be saved without drastic change. Moreover, current trends of change seem to indicate that the transition to the age of knowledge is creating new situations that serve the interests of the media and economic monopolies, and that such situations are least conducive to the revival or even sustenance of either the middle class or traditional political plurality. What we have today and are expected to have more of it in the future is socio-cultural diversity, not socioeconomic plurality.

While the actual and perceived conflict between socioeconomic classes in society is largely interest-related, conflict between socio-cultural groups is largely value-related. The first lends itself easily to compromise while the second does not, which usually precipitates deeper conflicts. Democracy, the mechanism to manage and resolve conflict of interest in society, will have to be restructured to produce a new democratic model capable of reconciling conflict of values. Socio-cultural plurality in the new model will replace the traditional socio-political plurality, making power subject to sharing by all socio-cultural groups, not just a privilege to be monopolized by an affluent elitist group.

Since the state came into existence thousands of years ago, men and women have continued to struggle to define and claim their rights. They used religion, philosophy, manipulation, science, and appeals to power to gain some of what they thought was their own; at times they had to resort to violence to attain their goals. But despite their many great achievements in this endeavor, the struggle for freedom and

equality is still incomplete; it may never be completed. Democracy was one of our notable achievements on the way to freedom and equality. And while it succeeded as a value, its success as a political system leaves a lot to be desired. As a value, democracy must be embraced and helped to deepen its roots in all societies and cultures. As a political system, however, democracy needs to be restructured to regain relevance and be able to carry out its noble mission.

## Chapter Ten

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### Cultural Determinism

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The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism by the end of the 1980s were two important aspects of a new transitional period in societal development. They created a fluid, largely unstable state of political and social affairs, causing the world's elite to lose its sense of direction. Chester A. Crocker, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, describing those developments, wrote in 1992 that the "historic changes since 1989 have profoundly destabilized the previously existing [world] order without replacing it with any recognizable or legitimate system. New vacuums are setting off new conflicts. The result of this is a global law-and-order deficit that is straining the capacity of existing and emerging security institutions."<sup>218</sup>

Since "old habits die hard and the habits of power die hardest of all,"<sup>219</sup> the sociopolitical and security thinkers of the waning era could not accept the invalidation of the ideas they helped formulate, nor could they transform such ideas to accommodate the new trends of change. The old guard could only reformulate certain concepts of the past, and claim victory for capitalism and democracy, unaware that both concepts have already entered a transformational era of their own. The United States, wrote Chester A. Crocker further, "wants to preach to the rest of the world the post-cold war litany of U.S. goals and hopes: democracy and human rights, free markets and peaceful

settlement of disputes. This sermon is fine as far as it goes, but it is a hopelessly inadequate answer to our era of change."<sup>220</sup> It is also inadequate because it fails to understand the civilizational stage in which each nation lives.

Yet the old guard continued to repeat the same sermon and thus to hinder the development of new ideas to deal with the emerging situation. And in order to explain the failure of most nations to adopt the Western ideals of democracy, human rights, and a free market economy, the old guard moved to develop a new model based on culture, claiming that culture is responsible for progress and for backwardness, success and failure, peace and violence. They also claim that culture does not meaningfully change over time and the developed nations therefore are destined to advance, while the underdeveloped nations are destined to languish in poverty and backwardness. Consequently, a new philosophical view emerged that considers culture the decisive factor determining the fate of nations, giving credence to what might be called "cultural determinism."

When several Asian nations entered a period of rapid and sustained economic growth in the 1980s, questions were raised regarding the secret of the Asian economic success. The answer, many political philosophers and historians were quick to claim, was the Asian culture and its predominant Confucian ethics. Francis Fukuyama said, "The important variable [in the Asian economic experience] is not industrial policy per se but culture."<sup>221</sup> As for the role of Confucian ethics, Fukuyama wrote, "Confucianism has defined the character of social relations within the Chinese society over the last two and a half millennia. It consists of a series of ethical principles that are said to undergird a properly functioning society."<sup>222</sup> Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve System, said in a congressional testimony in 1997, "much of what we took for granted in our free market system to be human nature was not nature at all, but culture."<sup>223</sup>

But if culture is the determining factor behind the economic success of China and the so-called Asian Tigers of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, then why did those nations have to wait

until the second half of the twentieth century to industrialize? And if Confucian ethics have been embedded in the social fabric of Asian society for 2,500 years, then why did Confucianism fail to cause the industrialization of those countries centuries or even decades ago? Why did it take those Asian nations more than 200 years after the Industrial Revolution had occurred in Europe to enter the industrial age? And why did North Korea, which shares with its southern neighbor the same culture and Confucian ethics, fail so far to replicate the experience of the south and industrialize? And if culture is the true force behind the Asian economic success and the source of the social trust that is supposed to prevail in Asian societies, then why did most of those nations face a deep social and economic crisis in the late 1990s? Although culture is an important factor influencing the fate of nations and the course of their economic and social development, it is not the only factor.

China, in fact, was the most advanced nation in the world during the European Middle Ages. Printing, for example, was discovered and used in China at least one century before Europe discovered it. China also had the best and most complete records regarding its past and its bureaucratic system, and is said to have been the most sophisticated of any state in older times. "Consider China at the outset of the fifteenth century. Its curiosity, its instinct for exploration, and its drive to build and create all the technologies necessary to launch the industrial revolution—something that would not actually occur for another 400 years."<sup>224</sup> The Chinese nation, as well as other great nations of the past such as the Arab, the Indian, and the Persian nations, has failed to make any meaningful contribution to human civilization since the fifteenth century.

Although more than 200 years have passed since the Industrial Revolution occurred, historians are yet to reach a consensus regarding the social forces that instigated it and describe the role each force played. In contrast, the promoters of Asia, especially Asian politicians, and the believers in cultural determinism in the West, were quick to declare that Confucian culture is the social force behind Asia's success

story. But as tribute was being paid to Asian cultures and Confucian ethics, many of the institutions and relationships built around them were crumbling, causing both social trust and economic vitality in several Asian countries to suffer serious damage.

### **Culture and Politics**

After winning World War II, Western nations decided to forge a strategic relationship to foster cooperation, rebuild shattered economies, enhance military power, and contain communism and Soviet expansionism. While security considerations were the major force behind such an alliance, Western culture and its Christian ethics were given credit for sustaining the alliance and making cooperation possible. Democracy and human rights were also found to be traits of Western culture and its Judo-Christian ethos. In contrast, most other cultures whose core is neither Jewish nor Christian were often called "barbaric," their peoples "uncivilized." And when ethnic conflict spread and intensified, particularly in non-Western countries in the 1990s, culture was identified as the villain causing trouble and committing atrocities.

Samuel Huntington, for example, wrote saying that "cultural identity is the central factor shaping a country's associations and antagonisms."<sup>225</sup> While culture does shape every group's identity, it does not necessarily shape a country's identity because less than ten percent of all countries in the world have homogeneous populations identifying with one culture only. In fact, the identity of every national group is influenced by history, culture, ideology, education, interests, as well as by the outside. An individual in society is usually a member of several associations that have different and sometimes contradictory goals. For example, every citizen is a member of a family tied to it by blood, a member of a residential community tied to it by shared concerns, often a member of a professional organization tied to it by shared goals, a member of an economic entity tied to it by interests, and a member of a nation tied to it by culture. All of these associations have

varied values and seek different goals and thus affect individuals and groups in more contradictory than complementary ways.

Huntington also says, "global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart."<sup>226</sup> He also asserts that cultures or as he says, civilizations, are destined to clash, and that their inevitable clash will determine the nature and intensity of conflict in the world. Huntington, it ought to be noted, employs the concepts "culture," "civilization," and "religion" alternately to mean the same thing, while their meanings and roles in society are actually different. Francis Fukuyama, in contrast, does not see cultural differences and cultural competition as a major source of conflict. "On the contrary," he writes, "the rivalry arising from the interaction of different cultures can frequently lead to creative change, and there are numerous cases of such cultural cross-stimulation."<sup>227</sup> Thomas Sowell says, "Cross-cultural experiences have been associated with cultural achievements."<sup>228</sup>

If the thesis of Huntington is correct, and that "peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together and peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart," the European nations should never have fought each other; they should have always worked together and allied themselves with one another against non-Europeans. Europeans have had similar cultures since the times of the Roman Empire and have had democratic systems for almost two centuries. Yet most European states fought each other and committed atrocities against one another and against their own minority citizens. They also allied themselves with non-Europeans having different cultures, particularly the Japanese, the Turks, and the Arabs, against other Europeans having similar cultures. But if the correct assumption is that Europeans have different cultures, then how could they unite after World War II and cooperate with each other to achieve shared goals?

In contrast to the Europeans, Arabs claim to have and do largely have the same culture, not just similar cultures, the same history, the same language, and most of them have the same religion. Yet Arabs

have failed to unite and ally themselves against non-Arabs; all bilateral and multilateral attempts to unite have failed. Most Latin Americans also share similar cultures and the same religion and language, but are unable to unite.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the central Asian Islamic countries were freed from the yoke of communism and were able to rediscover their Turkish cultural background and Islamic heritage. But instead of forging unity among their peoples, using culture and religion, they began to compete and fight each other. Even African tribes having similar or the same cultures, languages, and religions and very little to fight over seem to have found fighting and killing each other easier and more psychologically rewarding than uniting with each other. The examples of Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia are cases that prove beyond doubt that culture is incapable by itself of uniting peoples separated by ethnicity and living in the pre-industrial age.

"People separated by ideology but united by culture come together, as the two Germanys did and as the two Koreas and the several Chinas are beginning to,"<sup>229</sup> writes Huntington. This claim is very far from the truth. The two Germanys did not come together and could not have come together while separated by ideology; they came together in 1989 after the collapse of the Marxist ideology and the failure of East Germany's economy. The people of East Germany moved en masse towards the West, destroying the Berlin Wall and forcing open all borders. Race, ethnicity, and need were the real forces that incited the Easterners to move west and encouraged the Westerners to embrace their blood brothers and help save them from economic catastrophe. As for the Koreas, the only thing unifying them today is mutual antagonism nurtured by ideology; their cultural ties are unable to overcome their ideological differences. The return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 was not the result of choice, but occurred because Hong Kong was an occupied Chinese territory whose return to the motherland was agreed upon between the occupied and the occupier a long time ago.

The United States' relationship with other countries also makes the point that culture is not the major force shaping inter-state relationships. The U.S., despite sharing a similar culture with Western European nations, cooperates more with Mexico, which has a different culture, than with France. It also allies itself with nations such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey, with which it shares neither culture, language, religion, nor borders, but only economic and security interests. Moreover, the level of coordination between the U.S. and Russia and even China, two countries having different cultures, is superior to the level of cooperation with Italy, which has a similar culture.

Unity of peoples and countries in the past was accomplished by force, not by choice. Unity of peoples and countries in the post-industrial world is accomplished by choice, not by force. Economic interests and shared security concerns are strong justifications for unity among different states; cultural similarities are helpful but not sufficient to provide by themselves a rationale for political unity.

### **Culture and Conflict**

When some groups of Muslim radicals began to engage in terrorism, Islam, Arab culture, and Islamic values were blamed for the terrible acts. Many voices were raised in the West, particularly in the United States, condemning Islam, its followers, and its legacy, instead of only those committing the crimes. The same voices also warned against the impending Islamic mortal threat. One such voice, in fact, called Islam a "killer culture," its followers "barbarians."<sup>230</sup> Christianity, in contrast, was hailed as a culture of tolerance; its ethical principles were called the backbone of democracy and human rights.

Samuel Huntington sees Islam and Muslims, not only Islamic fanatics, as a serious problem facing the West and threatening its culture and way of life. He wrote, "The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power."<sup>231</sup> He also sees other nations with

non-Western cultures as a threat to the West and its culture, especially Asians in general and the Chinese in particular. "At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its [Christian] Orthodox, Hindu, African and Western Christian neighbors. At the macro level, the dominant division is between the West and the rest, with the most intense conflicts occurring between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other,"<sup>232</sup> Huntington says.

While Islam and its followers are seen as the West's eternal enemy, China is seen as Islam's natural ally in its fight against Christianity and the West. This kind of logic requires, of course, careful planning and decisive action by the West to protect itself and promote its cultural values. But instead of imploring the West to work with nations seen as sworn enemies, to help them moderate their attitudes, both Howard Bloom and Samuel Huntington call for using the West's superior power to suppress, weaken, and dominate other non-Western nations. Huntington says that "to minimize its losses requires the West to wield skillfully its economic resources as carrots and sticks in dealing with other societies, to bolster its unity and coordinate its policies so as to...promote and exploit differences among non-Western nations."<sup>233</sup> He also calls, although implicitly, for ethnic cleansing, accusing immigrants of refusing to integrate into the Western societies where they live and of promoting values and traditions that undermine Western culture. "Western culture," he claims, "is challenged by groups within Western societies. One such challenge comes from immigrants from other civilizations who reject assimilation and continue to adhere to and to propagate the values, customs, and cultures of their home societies."<sup>234</sup>

Huntington even sees economic progress in China not as a positive development contributing to increased East-West trade and understanding, but as a serious challenge threatening Western economic interests. "If the Chinese economic development continues, this could be the single most serious security issue American policy-makers confront in the early twenty-first century;" he says.<sup>235</sup> Bloom warns the West against the impending danger posed by other cultures and religions.

He says, "It is important that the societies which cherish pluralism survive. It is critical that they spread their values. It is imperative that they not allow their position in the pecking order of nations to slip and that they not cave in to the onrush of barbarians."<sup>236</sup>

But are the others really barbarians and Christians and Jews, as they insinuate, angels? Let us look at history and review some of its records. For a fair comparison, actions, reactions, and interactions of peoples and states have to be placed within the same historical contexts and be chosen to represent the same or very close times. Otherwise, actions and reactions would be unrelated, and the impact of progress in all human endeavors through modern times, would be rendered meaningless.

For example, the predecessors of most of the 'civilized' Americans of today are the barbarians who massacred the indigenous peoples of America, confiscated their property and destroyed their cultures. And the forefathers of the 'cultured' Europeans of today are people who never took a bath in their lives when peoples of the East had known bathing for centuries. The aristocrats of today, in both the East and the West, are mostly the descendants of those who used violence at will and robbed, exploited and enslaved others. In fact, social position in almost every society is little more than the residue of robbery and murder.

A few encounters between Muslims, on the one hand, and European Christians and Jews, on the other, shall be briefly examined.

In the year 638, the Muslim forces entered Jerusalem after its Christian inhabitants surrendered. But Sophronius, the patriarch of the city, refused to deliver the Holy City to anyone but Caliph Umar bin Al-Khattab. "Once the Christians had surrendered," writes Karen Armstrong, "there was no killing, no destruction of property, no burning of rival religious symbols, no expulsions or expropriations, and no attempts to force the inhabitants to embrace Islam."<sup>237</sup> When Caliph Umar came, he was invited to tour the city, and while visiting the holy places, the time for Muslim prayer came around. "Sophronius invited the caliph to pray where he was," beside the tomb. "Umar courteously

refused, neither would he pray in Constantine's Martyrium. Instead he went outside and prayed on the steps beside the busy thoroughfare of the *Cardo Maximus*."<sup>238</sup> The reason for refusing the invitation of the patriarch, was, as Umar explained, "that had he prayed inside the Christian shrines, the Muslims would have confiscated them and converted them into an Islamic place of worship...Umar immediately wrote a charter forbidding Muslims to pray on the steps of the Martyrium or build a mosque there."<sup>239</sup>

When the Christian Crusaders entered the holy city of Jerusalem in 1099, more than 450 years later, they committed untold massacres against its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants. "For three days the Crusaders systematically slaughtered about thirty thousand of the inhabitants of Jerusalem...Ten thousand Muslims who had sought sanctuary on the roof of the Aqsa [the third holiest place in Islam] were brutally massacred, and Jews were rounded up into their synagogues and put to the sword,"<sup>240</sup> writes Armstrong.

When Muslim Arabs governed parts of Spain for about eight centuries, neither Christians nor Jews suffered persecution or even intentional hardship. Historians, Jewish historians included, seem to agree that Jews enjoyed their golden age in Spain under the Arabic-Islamic rule. But when Spain returned to Christian rule around the end of the fifteenth century in the wake of the Arabs' defeat, no Muslim or Jew escaped persecution. All non-Christians were massacred, expelled, or forced to convert to Catholicism.

When Jewish Zionism began its quest to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, its plans included the forced deportation of Palestine's inhabitants, both Muslim Arabs and Christian Arabs. Terrorist acts were committed against Palestinian Arabs before and after the declaration of Jewish independence in 1948. Jewish gangs and the state's army killed innocent people and carried out terrorist acts to frighten the Muslim and Christian inhabitants of Palestine and force their deportation.

Nathan Ghofshi, describing the actions of his fellow Jews, said, "Zionists forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages which they did

not want to leave of their free will."<sup>241</sup> Yigal Alon, a former Deputy Prime Minister in Israel, wrote in his memoirs that he used psychological warfare "to cause the tens of thousands of Arabs who remained in Galilee to flee."<sup>242</sup> Almost all of these people were Christians, not Muslims.

A case from contemporary history may be even more instructive. In Bosnia, Serbs who are Orthodox Christians, Croats who are Catholics and Muslims came into conflict. All of them had lived before in the same country, under the same political and legal system, adhered to the same ideology, and had the same ethnic background; in other words, all had the same culture and the same life experience. But when the ideological bind fractured and the political process of nationalism was reactivated, the three communities were divided and numerous massacres were committed. Accounts of news organizations, human rights groups, the UN, and other American and European government agencies indicate that whatever crimes were committed by the Muslims of Bosnia were nothing compared to the atrocities committed by the Serbs and Croats. Muslims were also more willing to coexist with the others peacefully in one state.

To explain the causes of mutual enmity, Huntington claims that the three peoples of Bosnia belonged to three different civilizations. Bogdan Denitch, who, unlike Huntington, is a son of former Yugoslavia and a witness to its tragedy as a political activist, says that all Bosnians are ethnically and linguistically identical. "Both Serbian and Croatian national myths emphasize the centuries of wars against the Ottoman Turks. Muslim Slavs, though ethnically and linguistically identical to the Croats and Serbs, are somehow transformed into the legendary Turkish enemy and made to pay for the years of Turkish dominance."<sup>243</sup> Denitch explains how this perception is created and used to justify the killing of the other and the expropriation of their property and humanity. "For the Serbian nationalists it is self-evident that the Albanians and Bosnian Muslims are in cahoots with the world conspiracy of Islamic fundamentalism. The Croats are obviously an extension of the permanent plot of the Vatican against Orthodox

Christianity. For the Croat nationalists the Serbs represent the barbarian non-European hordes of treacherous Byzantine out to destroy Western civilization and Christian culture."<sup>244</sup>

Since culture is a product of civilization, culture acquires its major traits from the civilization that produces it. People living in an industrial society, for example, cannot continue to follow an agricultural way of life without being alienated and left behind. People, regardless of their cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs, adopt the attitudes and values dictated by the civilization of their respective societies.

Muslims living in Western countries such as Sweden, Germany, or the United States are generally much more tolerant and vastly less inclined toward violence than Muslims living in Egypt who are in turn more tolerant than those living in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Christians who live in the same Western countries are generally more tolerant and much less inclined toward violence than Christians living in Ireland, who are in turn more tolerant than those living in Serbia. And what is true for Muslims and Christians in general is also true for the followers of all other religions.

Moreover, Muslims and Christians living in Western countries are generally more tolerant than Christians and Muslims living in non-Western countries. People, almost all people, who live in the industrial and post-industrial societies, are generally more tolerant than those living in the pre-industrial and agricultural societies. A German Muslim, for example, is likely to be more tolerant and respectful of human rights than a Lebanese Christian. The culture of the German Muslim is in essence Western whose civilizational context is industrial. In contrast, the culture of the Lebanese Christian is in essence Eastern whose civilizational context is agricultural. Because of such cultural affiliation, most American Muslims with children tend to have Christmas trees during the holidays, and many Christian Arabs tend to fast during the holy month of Ramadan, or at least to refrain from eating and drinking in public places while Muslims fast.

Democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and religious tolerance as we know them today in the West, are products of mature

industrial and post-industrial societies. No society, Christian or non-Christian, that lives in the pre-industrial age is capable of accepting and adopting the same attitudes and institutions of democracy, tolerance, the rule of law, and human rights. All Muslim nations, most Asian peoples, and African and Latin American states are examples of societies living in the pre-industrial age and adhering to its cultural values and attitudes, which prevailed in the Western world less than three centuries ago.

Every civilization and its peoples and achievements, particularly scientific, technological, and economic ones, are weaker, lagging behind and dependent upon the civilization that follows. All nations and states living in the pre-industrial age are less advanced, less powerful, and less self-confident than nations living in the industrial and post-industrial ages are. And because the political process dominates all peoples living in the pre-industrial stage, they are less free, and generally bound by religion and nationalism, two ideologies that tend to accept neither tolerance nor cultural diversity.

While religion is the ideology of the socio-cultural process and the core of agricultural culture, nationalism is the ideology of the political process and the core of early industrial culture. Democracy on the other hand, is the ideology of the economic process and the core of mature industrial culture. Individualism, meanwhile, is fast emerging as the ideology of the infomedia process and the core of the culture of the knowledge age, to which the emerging global elite belongs. It is an elite that, while increasingly assuming world leadership, is helplessly losing attachment to traditional ideology, religion, nationalism, and sadly, social responsibility as well. It lives in an age where continuous change is the only unchanging fact of life, and where individualism and its culture are built around two major pillars: the maximization of personal gain, and the minimization of pain, nothing more and nothing less.

All Third World peoples, regardless of their nationality, may seek to enhance their military power, may condemn Western values, may talk passionately about that part of their collective memory that deals with Western colonialism; they may also complain bitterly about American

policies and IMF dictates. However, they cannot challenge the West or undermine its military superiority, nor can they destroy its civilization, upon which they are very much dependent. The West, therefore, has no reason to worry. Its nations as a group are more than one full civilization ahead of all other Third World nations. The frustration of Third World peoples should not be used as a warning shot to invoke age-old hatreds in the hearts of Christians in general and Western peoples in particular. Helping Third World nations industrialize and move beyond the age of agriculture and its self-centered culture is the shortest, fastest, safest, and certainly most morally rewarding way to spread democracy, promote human rights, foster world peace, and ensure prosperity for all.

John Kenneth Galbraith wrote recently, "The nation-state's jealous regard for territory, its protection of its own economic interest, the economic power of its national arms manufacturers, the national attention to the preservation of its language and cultural identity were the source of the greatest tragedies of modern times."<sup>245</sup> Since the nation-state cannot divorce itself from its acquisitions because they define its character and sources of powers, it has become a problem, promoting violence and undermining peace. It may be time therefore to reevaluate the national enterprise because its continuation as is serves no noble purpose.

### **World Order**

As the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disintegrated, the then-existing world order, which guided international relations for the previous half a century, came to an end. The "balance of power," which governed East-West relations and kept the peace, suddenly collapsed, creating a huge security vacuum in its wake. States and nations, which suffered under the old order like the former Soviet republics, were very happy to witness its demise. Other states and nations, which were able to violate international law with impunity

under the American umbrella, felt the need to resurrect it or replaced it with a similar order.

Being the only great power, the United States claimed victory after the demise of the Soviet Union and assumed, without much challenge, world leadership. Nevertheless, the collapse of the old order created a need for a fresh philosophical concept on which a new world order could be built. The new order, which was sought by the United States, however, was not meant to restructure international relations on a fairer basis, but to maintain stability and ensure continued American economic and political dominance.

Henry Kissinger claims that the old bi-polar balance of power system is being replaced by a multi-polar system where the United States and Russia are just two of its powers. He promotes such a system, asserting that while the world has experienced other systems in the past, the only system that actually worked was the post-World War II system based on a balance of power.<sup>246</sup> The balance of power concept implies the existence of at least two great powers, each with the military capability to destroy the other.

But the world powers which Kissinger and other American political philosophers claim to exist or are emerging, do not seem to possess the elements of power that characterize a world power. Most such powers lack the military capability, the technological knowledge, the organizational skills, the political will, as well as the economic base to project world power. While three or four states may have certain elements of power, in particular Russia, Japan, China, and the European Union, most other states lack all elements of power fit for a world power. Some states, like India, are economically weak and have serious ethnic problems that threaten their political unity and territorial integrity.

Since the political philosophers who represent the heart and mind of the Western political establishment were themselves products of the Cold War era, they could find no alternative to the old concept of the balance of power. They could only reinvent it, using culture to replace military power. Consequently, "hatred" and "mutuality of enmity" were advanced as principles to govern the relationship between "the

West and the rest." Such principles and the message they carry simply say that the West must hate the East, especially and more profoundly the Islamic world. They also say that the West must do everything it can to limit the potentialities of non-Western nations, divide them, and keep them on the defensive at all times. Without such a plan of action, they seem to say, the West would not be able to sustain its unity, protect its interests, and promote its values.

Samuel Huntington wrote, "There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are."<sup>247</sup> Such enemies, he implies, are all non-Western, non-Christian peoples in general, and Muslims and Chinese in particular. "Islamic and Sinic civilizations differ fundamentally in terms of their religion, culture, social structure, traditions, politics and basic assumptions about the root of their way of life,"<sup>248</sup> says Huntington. Being culturally different, he seems to add, is being a threat that should be feared and hated. "It is human to hate. For self-definition and motivation people need enemies," he asserts.<sup>249</sup> These claims make Huntington's thesis a strategy to implore the West to be aware of its global position and to encourage it to keep that dominant position. And while the superior position could be maintained by enhancing Western ability to compete and earn the trust of others, Huntington's strategy tends to emphasize the need to keep all potential competitors weak and subdued.

Despite the flashiness of the strategy's slogan, "The Clash of Civilizations," its assumptions are flawed, making it neither realistic nor helpful. It, for example, ignores the role of economics in global politics as well as the role of globalization in unifying the world's business and political elites. In addition, it ignores the weakening impact of such developments on each nation-state, particularly on its power base, social and cultural cohesiveness, and claimed political prerogatives.

While all violence is bad and must be condemned, there is no violence as bad or as dangerous as that committed in words. It poisons the soul, destroys the mind, and transforms good, innocent people into criminals. What we need today is not more hatred and violent

words but more compassion, understanding and tolerance. The only true path to peaceful coexistence that serves the interests and enhances the humanity of all lies in building bridges across cultural divides, recognizing and accepting ethnic, national and religious diversity, and helping poorer nations and suppressed minorities climb the social and civilizational ladder.

### **Social Trust**

Trust in society is an aspect of culture. Since cultures are different, expressions of trust also differ from one culture to another, and therefore from one society to another. Where trust is a shared habit, the society acquires "social capital," whose presence is important to economic development. Francis Fukuyama defines social capital as "a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in society or in certain parts of it."<sup>250</sup> He argues that there are societies that have more social capital than others, and that societies with more social capital are more capable of making progress and achieving prosperity. Social capital, which is a function of social trust, facilitates the creation of certain associations in society whose presence is indispensable to economic growth, Fukuyama claims. However, "social capital, the crucible of trust and critical to the health of an economy, rests on cultural roots,"<sup>251</sup> he adds. This simply means that culture determines the depth and breadth of trust in society, and that trust determines the proclivity of society to acquire social capital, which, in turn, determines the capacity of society to create the kind of organizations needed to achieve economic development and make progress.

"High-trust" societies, that is societies enjoying more social capital than others, are better equipped to create larger and more efficient economic organizations and consequently to have more competitive economies. And since "trust is culturally determined,"<sup>252</sup> culture becomes the most important factor determining the economic performance, even the economic structure and future of society.

This argument, which supports that advanced by Max Weber about a century ago, contradicts the argument which Karl Marx made half a century earlier. To Marx, economic conditions and structures shape cultures, but to Weber and Fukuyama, cultural forces shape economic conditions. This simply means that there are people who think that economic circumstances and structures are the forces that shape people's cultures and determine their history, while others think that cultural habits are the forces that shape economic conditions and determine people's future. In fact, there are still others who even claim that culture is genetically determined and is therefore incapable of change. In other words, they claim that there are peoples and groups who are destined to succeed; and there are others who are destined to fail, and that there is little that can be done to change this fact.

Cultures, which "involve attitudes as well as skills, languages, and customs,"<sup>253</sup> appeared in the early stages of human development as tools and views to deal with the environment and tie people together. Culture evolved as a reaction to life conditions and was developed to enhance humans' ability to deal with nature. This simply means that the economic aspects of life influenced the development of culture. But once established and accepted, culture became the organizing principles of every society, the basis of social relationships, the framework of thinking, and the tool to deal with life challenges and changed circumstances. Culture, consequently, began to shape people's attitudes toward man and nature, and that, in turn, made the economic aspects of life an integral part of a societal life influenced by culture.

The development of agriculture, which changed economic conditions profoundly, had little if anything to do with culture. But the practice of agriculture changed culture profoundly and transformed the structure of society, creating a new society and a new, more advanced civilization. Because of this transformational process, cultures and social structures became two inseparable components of one societal process, the socio-cultural process, which dominated all aspects of agricultural life until the development of the political process centuries later.

Max Weber, observing the different economic achievements of the different religious communities in America, was correct to argue that different religious beliefs are largely responsible for different economic conditions. Different attitudes, work ethics and outlooks, or simply different cultures, were capable of generating different economic accomplishments. Karl Marx, observing the disruptive influence of capitalism on people's way of life as well as on social relations and structures, was also correct to argue that changed material conditions and economic structures are largely responsible for changing people's way of living, and thus their attitudes and values. Therefore, neither culture alone nor economic conditions by themselves are capable of causing or explaining the profound socio-cultural and socioeconomic transformations in society.

Trust, being a cultural habit only, cannot explain life's complexity. Trust exists in every society, in the poor as well as in the rich, in the traditional as well as in the modern. No relationship could be established and sustained without a degree of trust large enough to enable participants to feel comfortable working together. The form and role of trust, however, differ from one society to another because of differences in social structures and civilizational settings.

In traditional societies living in the pre-industrial age, trust is more of a habit that reflects values embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of society. In non-traditional societies living in the industrial and post-industrial ages, trust is more of an attitude that reflects rational thinking. The former tends to be concerned primarily with traditions and relationships shaped and regulated by values and belief systems. The latter tends to be concerned primarily with economic interests and relationships shaped and regulated by laws and ethical codes of conduct.

Traditional trust prevails within smaller circles, particularly within families and smaller communities of faith and kinship. Non-traditional trust, or social trust, prevails in larger circles, particularly in societies and large organizations built around interests. And since relationships within smaller circles tend to be stable, traditional trust tends also to be stable as well, playing similar roles in all such communities and

relationships. Social trust, meanwhile, is forced to change as interests and relationships change, and thus it plays different roles in the lives of different societies and organizations. The first is a function of culture, which seldom changes within one's lifetime; the latter is a function of interests and economic structures, which normally live a life of continuous change.

In an increasingly complex world, where transactions are numbered in the millions every second, no system can function without social trust. Traditional trust would certainly make things easier and life less stressful, but trusting people who place different values on different things is not possible. Only social trust based on contractual relationships will do. But as societies move from the agricultural to the industrial age, community life becomes increasingly complex, social relationships multi-faceted, and interests more prevalent and relevant. Traditions and traditional values, as a result, begin to retreat and be confined to smaller and smaller circles. Since cultures change slowly and have always resisted change, all societies in transition experience cultural chaos and thus a trust deficit.

During transitional periods, while traditional trust loses ground as its space contracts, social trust is still weak because its legal base is yet to be developed. A trust deficit, or a legal vacuum, is created, allowing an environment of corruption, hypocrisy, opportunism, and nepotism to grow and prevail. Because of such an environment, some people could be trustworthy in the traditional sense, yet untrustworthy in the social sense. Nepotism is only one example of a behavior exhibiting commitment to traditional relationships and relatives and, at the very same time, disregard of public interest and the interests of others. While personal and familial loyalty may continue and even strengthen in such an environment, national loyalty and social responsibility are always weakened.

The so-called "low-trust" societies have plentiful traditional trust, but little social trust. In contrast, the so-called "high-trust" societies have plentiful social trust, but little traditional trust. Since social trust is more important in larger, more complex societies, especially in the

industrial and post-industrial ones, traditional societies lacking adequate social trust are unable to build and manage complicated societal systems and sophisticated institutions and organizations that characterize modern, industrial societies. Yet they are better able to define their particular identities and maintain the integrity of their families, kinship and cultural communities.

Germany and Japan are, according to Fukuyama, two high-trust societies, with plentiful social trust. As such they are supposed to be better able to organize their economies and economic relationships in ways that improve the productivity of workers and increase the efficiency of business operations. And because of their propensity for spontaneous sociability, Germany and Japan are supposed to be more innovative in creating and managing new systems and relationships. In other words, the so-called high-trust societies are supposed to have a more dynamic economy, a more innovative business community, and faster wealth generating institutions. But looking at both Germany and Japan as the twentieth century ended, they appeared to have stagnant economies, largely conservative business communities, and slow wealth generating societies. Japan, in fact, is facing the most serious economic crisis in its modern history. And while Germany has begun to transform its culture and grow, Japan seemed to lack the courage to make the cultural changes needed to resume growth.

In open societies with dynamic economies, people are more concerned with interests than with values, causing social trust to be more important than traditional trust. In such a society, which the United States represents, contractual arrangements become the norm, and winning, just like losing, becomes an ordinary occurrence with minimal social consequences. In rather conservative societies with largely stagnant economies, which Japan tends to represent, people tend to emphasize values, sometimes at the expense of interests, causing both winning and losing to carry significant social consequences. Because of these consequences, businessmen and politicians tend to prefer stability and avoid risk, and show strong commitment to the public interest.

In the 1990s, for example, several Japanese businessmen committed suicide because of business failure and the social stigma that goes with it. In the United States, in contrast, more than 1.6 million people declared bankruptcy in 1997 and many people, who were convicted of stealing public money, defrauding investors, and committing sexual and other crimes, became celebrities. The U.S. today is a country where an infamous person has a good chance of becoming rich and famous, while an honest person has a better chance of dying with neither money nor fame.

The Chinese society, says Fukuyama, "is regulated not by constitution and system of laws flowing from it but by the internalization of Confucian ethical principles on the part of each individual as a process of socialization."<sup>254</sup> The same socialization process of ethical principles pervades in most Islamic countries such as Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia as well as in most Catholic countries such as, Bolivia, Croatia, Ireland and Mexico. The fact that Chinese societies were able to achieve genuine economic development in the last quarter of the twentieth century, while Islamic and Latin American countries were unable to do so, has little to do with either Confucianism, Islam or Catholicism. Only when China did what Japan had done a century earlier and departed from its traditional value system and communist ideology, and launched a plan to transform its culture that it was able to make meaningful economic progress.

In fact, the old Chinese ethics to which much credit is being given by Fukuyama and others, were described by Friedrich Hegel about 150 years ago as deceptive and fraudulent. Hegel wrote, "No honor exists and no one has an individual right in respect of others, the consciousness of debasement predominates. [The Chinese] are notorious for deceiving whenever they can. Friend deceives friend and no one resents the attempt at deception. Their frauds are most astutely and craftily performed."<sup>255</sup> Such a judgment, while clearly racist, describes ethics that could not engender social trust or could be responsible for the rise of any society.

Plans to organize societies in ways that promote economic development can only succeed if the prevailing socio-cultural incentives and hindrances are such that they facilitate social and economic change. In Southeast Asia, for example, the plan to transform the economy was introduced in conjunction with a program to transform the socio-cultural context. In Egypt, Nigeria, and Venezuela, in contrast, the economic plan failed because it did not include similar programs to transform the socio-cultural contexts. And when the industrializing Asian nations decided in the mid-1990s to preserve traditions and maintain traditional relationships and values, both the economy and society suffered a serious setback. Preserving traditional relationships and traditional trust, while failing to promote and develop social trust, had encouraged nepotism and cronyism and led to the spread of corruption and unaccountability, causing crisis to engulf society.

Cultural values and attitudes are generally valid as such only within their own civilizational contexts, and more so within their own societal contexts. Therefore, all cultural values, traditions, and attitudes are relative and should not be judged outside their own civilizational contexts. For example, while it is possible and largely fair to compare certain Mexican cultural values with similar ones in Egypt, it is neither possible nor fair to compare aspects of either culture with those of Germany or the United States. An attitude that encourages casual sex, while acceptable in the U.S., is considered immoral by all cultures of the agricultural civilization, including cultures dominant in small Catholic towns and villages in countries such as Mexico, Spain, and Ireland. The holy status of cows in Hinduism, on the other hand, is considered irrational by most other peoples of the world, particularly since millions of Indians suffer malnutrition.

The high trust/low trust model articulated by Fukuyama is an attempt to explain differences in economic achievements among nations. Though it is a helpful tool of analysis, it confuses more than it instructs. It ignores three important facts that make its assumptions largely unrealistic and its conclusions highly unreliable, if not harmful.

1. It ignores the fact that cultures are products of civilizations and change greatly and profoundly as people move from one civilization to another.
2. It ignores the fact that all industrial societies have similar cultures and live in the same civilization and, therefore, their economic and technological achievements are at roughly the same level. A high-trust society like Britain is not better off economically than a low-trust society like Italy.
3. It fails to understand that the impact of economics on culture is nearly as important as Marx said when the society is industrialized, and that the impact of culture on economics is nearly as important as Weber said when the society is still in the pre-industrial stage. Therefore, to base the analysis on one view only is to distort reality and produce unreliable conclusions.

People, all people, have a need for belonging to a group in which they can seek and receive recognition. Yet, while seeking recognition, most individuals find themselves belonging to many groups, starting with the family and moving outwards to larger circles that usually end with the state. The human sense of belonging and the desire to compete for recognition, as well as the commitment to a group weaken as one moves from the smaller, more intimate circles to the larger, less personal ones. The rules of belonging and competition within the smaller groups are usually clearly defined and more strictly enforced. Trust, honesty, and dedication are, consequently, very strong within family circles, good and practical within clans, weak and shadowy within larger societal circles, and almost non-existent between tribes and estranged communities. Social trust in pre-industrial societies, therefore, is very weak not because of culture or religious faith but because of social structure, which is a function of civilizational development. Association in such societies is largely vertical, not horizontal, and therefore limits the potential for socialization and social trust.

While the prevalence of traditional trust deepens mutual obligations within smaller circles, it weakens social trust and thus social responsibility within larger circles. Members of each circle or group,

while trusting each other, tend to vest little trust in members of other groups, especially ethnic and religious ones. However, the prevalence of traditional trust, and the mutual obligations it usually engenders, serves to strengthen families and ethnic communities as well as communities of faith. And that, in turn, helps control crime and social vice in society in general and provide a strong support system for the poor and the elderly in particular, preventing them from drifting in large numbers into drug addiction and homelessness. Yet mutual suspicion among cultural and religious groups on the one hand, and a general lack of social trust on the other, make conflict in traditional societies easy to ignite but difficult to stop or even control.

For example, the twenty-one Arab countries, with a population a little larger than that of the U.S., have crime and drug addiction rates less than a fraction of the American rates. And despite having a per capita income of approximately six percent of America's, there are almost no homeless people in the Arab world. But when conflict erupted in the Sudan, in Somalia, in Lebanon, and in Algeria, it was bloody and very costly in human as well as in economic terms. On the other hand, the relative death rate in the Arab countries due to car accidents is about seven times that of the U.S., despite the fact that car ownership in the Arab countries is less than five percent that of the United States. Most drivers in Arab countries have little respect for traffic laws and less understanding of the nature and consequences of the law; drivers in general drive recklessly and die needlessly.

Where vertical association is the norm, as is the case in tribal and agricultural societies, authoritarianism thrives and democracy suffers; and where horizontal association is the norm, as is the case in industrial and post-industrial societies, democracy thrives and authoritarianism suffers. In addition, where vertical association is the norm, no member of any group, whether ethnic or religious, is usually able to get more recognition or wealth unless someone else gets less. The game in such a society is more of a zero-sum game that neither facilitates social change nor encourages personal initiative or economic progress. As

the number of winners increases in such a society, the number of losers tends to increase as well.

In contrast, where association in society is horizontal, most people are able to get more without necessarily causing others to get less. The game in such a society almost always produces positive results, making social change possible, economic development attainable, and progress inevitable. Historical records even show that since the Industrial Revolution the relative number of losers in all post-agricultural societies has decreased as the relative number of winners has increased. For example, due to the information and communications revolutions, "the United States has created more billionaires in the last fifteen years than in its previous history."<sup>256</sup> While the number of billionaires was 13 in 1982, it reached 189 in 1999. People living in the pre-industrial age are less able to produce and accumulate wealth, even when capital arrives without much effort; they are more able to spend it senselessly than invest it wisely, as the Spaniards and the oil-exporting countries demonstrated in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively.

## Chapter Eleven

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### A World in Transition

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A careful look at our world as the twenty-first century begins reveals that we have entered a new transitional period in societal development that promises to take humanity to a higher, more complex civilization. It is a period dominated by three major, rather unconventional, trends of change: economic integration across state lines, political fragmentation within state lines, and socio-cultural segmentation within national lines. While economic integration is moving fast, sometimes with, but often without the blessing of the political process, political fragmentation is occurring despite the strong objections of that process. Socio-cultural segmentation, meanwhile, is sneaking, largely unnoticed, to meet community needs long ignored by both the economic and political processes.

The first transitional period in human development, which caused most ancient societies to move from the pre-agricultural to the agricultural civilization, took about 3,000 years. By the time the transformation was completed, the socio-cultural process had given the new agricultural society its unique character and way of life. But because change was very slow and one-dimensional, the nature, magnitude and impact of the transformation could not be depicted or felt by any generation.

The second transitional period, which enabled certain societies to move from the agricultural to the industrial civilization, took about 300 years to complete. Change during that period was dominated and

led by the political and economic processes, with the latter being the more instrumental. Because this period was relatively short and two societal processes were involved in shaping its nature and direction, it affected people's lives more profoundly than the previous one. It also caused the number of societies that could complete the transformation to the industrial age to be limited. Successive generations living that period were able to depict the depth of change and its transformational impact on the lives of older, as well as younger, generations.

The third major period of transition in societal development is the one we are living today. It is expected to last about thirty years, at the end of which a small number of societies will have moved from the industrial age to the knowledge age. Change during this period is being instigated and led by the economic and infomedia processes, with the later being more instrumental, but effected through the actions and reactions of all processes. Because this period is very short, and since all processes are involved in shaping its direction, almost every person in the world is able to depict the depth of change it is causing and feel its impact on his life as well as on the lives of others.

### **The Reality of Transition**

Transitional periods of social change are troubling times that create doubt and cause fear, leading some people to nurture guarded optimism and others to despair. They also cause many more people to feel lost and bewildered, forcing them to seek the revival of old ideas and form radical movements. In the short run, the ability of values to resist change would enable radicalism to score some gain, while in the long run rationality wins, causing ideologically die-hard radicals to be defeated and penalized. The pragmatists, meanwhile, are more likely to be rewarded and recognized.

Radical forces of nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and cultural particularism are ideological movements whose primary objective is to recreate a past long vanished, a past that may never have existed as imagined. Social forces behind such movements

believe that the historical process is capable of reversing itself and reviving times long gone. Because of such an attitude, the only connection that radical and conservative forces have to reality is a negative one; they reject it, see no hope in it, and express readiness to use whatever power they may have to hasten its demise. In fact, radical forces of nationalism and religious fundamentalism can neither understand reality nor can they deal with it constructively. They even lack the capacity to understand history and, therefore, are always on a collision course with it. While they express a strong belief in history and claim to accept its judgment, all radical forces of history have repeatedly failed to learn history's most fundamental lesson. They have failed to understand that history never repeats itself, that the historical process is irreversible, and that all radical movements throughout history have died before achieving their declared objectives, leaving behind a lot of pain and little or no gain.

Social transformation and globalization have made national cultures weaker and somewhat suspect, forcing them to move gradually toward disintegration into different, largely competing subcultures. They also made religion in general less sacred and less able to unite its followers and much less able to demand unquestioned allegiance and obedience as before. "For the first time in recorded history faith became purely a matter of choice."<sup>257</sup> Nationalism, moreover, has become less of a liberating force and more of a bind that ties people to a dead, largely fictitious past, more able to limit their horizon than expand it.

On the other hand, Political and economic change associated with globalization has weakened the nation-state, transforming it from an asset into a liability. Ethnicity and ethnic aspirations have emerged as a ghost haunting the memory and threatening the integrity of the nation-state and causing it to lose much political and moral authority. Democracy, moreover, has become less able to represent the masses and less capable of responding to their real needs and changed circumstances; it could no longer command people's respect, especially the poor, the disfranchised, and the discriminated against minorities.

Economic change, meanwhile, has made competition a valued individual characteristic that colors attitudes toward everything in life, causing individualism to become more of an ideology and social responsibility to be weakened. "So many of the rich want to turn their backs on the poor; selfish concerns seem to displace enlightened self interest."<sup>258</sup> The standard by which economic individualism judges what is sacred in life, writes Robert Theobald, "is money, and the only thing more sacred than money is more money."<sup>259</sup> In fact, individualism, consumerism, and a pleasure culture have made money the gold standard by which the value of all things is measured; money is being seen as embodying morality and reflective of both intelligence and success. Thus, economic decisions that affect people's lives and greatly influence their future are made largely by corporations and managers whose sense of social responsibility is declining, and whose most pressing goal is to make as much money as possibly attainable.

Despite the fabulous contributions made by the infomedia process in enriching societal life in general, its impact on culture has been largely negative, undermining the social glue that ties societies together. The promotion of a culture of individualism, pleasure, and unlimited consumption where everything is permitted, is undermining all the intangibles that make community a living space for people. In fact, the media, through its entertainment programs and commercials, is gradually destroying the essence of community and the values that served people well for countless generations—values that enabled man through trials and tribulations to make progress towards liberty, freedom, tolerance, human rights, justice, and the pursuit of happiness in a just society.<sup>260</sup> The media in general, and its entertainment programs in particular, are polluting the social environment and distorting reality, making vice, immorality, drugs, and violence, not just acceptable actions but often profitable enterprises as well, if not respectable virtues.

The American emphasis on individualism has become an ideology as dangerous and as removed from reality as most other ideologies of the recent past. Since all past ideologies have caused more pain than

gain, individualism is expected to harm the new society and distort its image. Moreover, an emphasis on individual rights without an equal emphasis on individual responsibilities is undermining the ethical code of laws and the value systems that nurture decency and honesty in society. "Any serious quest for a just society," writes Roger I. Conner, "starts with a recognition that the values represented by rights and responsibilities are morally equal."<sup>261</sup> The ascendance of the law in society and emphasis on its role in protecting individual rights, though indispensable to a properly functioning society, have vastly restricted the role of ethics in fashioning and guiding human relations and community foundations.

People in the new age of knowledge are fast becoming more individualistic, less religious and ideological, and less committed to lofty goals; they are, in fact, no longer able to see lofty goals. They fight largely on their own to win battles they personally frame and target. They have difficulty accepting reality, being always in search of a new opportunity to exploit, a new reality to shape, a new relationship to structure and forge. Most people today seek to maximize pleasure and gain more wealth and power, while minimizing worry, risk, and pain. A privileged class made up of the super-rich has emerged, poverty has increased, and the traditional middle class is being squeezed. And "out of that squeeze comes a moral crisis that makes us want to cut loose from those who are suffering,"<sup>262</sup> as if to say—in word and deed—every man for himself.

In such an environment of individualism, lack of social responsibility, money worship, and ignoring if not blaming the poor, inequality is deepening and fast becoming structural both in the rich and poor countries, as well as between them. "We live in a world scared by inequality," said World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn on September 26, 2000. "Something is wrong when the richest 20 percent of the global population receive more than 80 percent of the global income...and when 2.8 billion people still live on less than \$2 a day."<sup>263</sup> In the United States, it is estimated that about 36 million

Americans sleep hungry every night, while about 100 million tons of food is wasted every year.

### **The Reality of the Middle Class**

In the agricultural age, people were either rich or poor; there was no middle class. Religion, which was the predominant social philosophy of the times, helped people, especially the poor among them, to accept their lot in life. The poor were made to believe that God ordained their fortunes in life and their position in society. Meanwhile, the poor were seen by almost all religions, particularly Christianity and Islam, as being closer to God and morally and spiritually superior to the rich. Both the rich and the poor, as a result, were largely satisfied and content, the first having money in their pockets and slaves to serve them, the second having God on their side.

In the industrial age, both the economic conditions and the ways of living changed dramatically. While the position of religion in society was weakened and transformed, new values and work ethics were introduced and promoted to the point of being perceived as a religious calling. In addition, the advancement of science and technology and continued economic growth served to undermine both the traditional and religious wisdom. The poor, consequently, were no longer considered closer to God, and could no longer claim moral superiority; their position eventually drifted to the point of being seen as socially and morally inferior. The rich, meanwhile, were called upon to help the needy and be socially responsible. And as the rich and poor were being separated, the middle class grew in size and power. Nevertheless, the socioeconomic gaps that separated the three social classes from one another had continued to widen and; and as of the 1960s, the gaps began to acquire socio-cultural characteristics as well.

The new age of knowledge, with its emphasis on individualism and material gain, has caused the middle class to lose some of its income and much of its power. The economic shift from manufacturing to services and the changing nature of the knowledge requirements of

the new information-intensive jobs have narrowed the opportunities open to members of the middle class. Consequently, the income gap separating them from the rich began to widen, and new knowledge barriers appeared, limiting their ability to move upward. This, in turn, caused the socio-cultural gaps in society to deepen further, making it easier for members of the middle class to move downward than upward. All of this makes the opportunities open to the rich and knowledgeable seem unlimited, the need to expand the very limited opportunities for the poor unprecedented, and the challenge to rescue the middle class very difficult.

Materialism, which has gradually and quietly been acquiring the role claimed by religion in the agricultural society, has become the major driving force in life. People are rich and poor, not because God and religion ordained it but largely because economics and knowledge determined it. Man, consequently, is more and more seen as the master of his own fate, and that neither God nor religion has anything to do with his lot in life. Meanwhile, poverty and community have begun to lose their connection to the larger society, causing society itself to gradually disintegrate into sub-societies.

The industrial society was the only society in history that could and did have a credible middle class. Neither the tribal, agricultural, nor the knowledge society did or seems able to have such a class. Even the new industrializing Asian nations would not be able to emulate the Western experience and produce middle classes capable of holding society together and forcing social change in their favor as their European and American predecessors did. In fact, the new economic and political crisis, which hit such countries in the late 1990s, has weakened the middle class, forcing many of its members to join the ranks of the poor. In the fast emerging world community or "global village," the knowledge society would, generally speaking, represent the world's rich, while the industrial society represents the world's middle class. The agricultural society, meanwhile, would represent the world's poor, and the tribal society the poverty-stricken underclass of the world.

## Reality of Capitalism

Change associated with the advancement of the age of knowledge has exposed the limits of both capitalism and democracy, which form together the organizing principles of the industrial society. While capitalism is no longer able to build the kind of economy that can lift everyone, democracy is no longer able to ensure equity or justice for all. Even freedom of speech is no longer guaranteed. The average person in the new society has become subject to manipulation by the media, exploitation by capitalism, and deception by politics; one is also at the mercy of violence and crime.

The free market economy, which is being advanced by many as the solution for every problem in society, is not as free as claimed; its impact is not as positive as its promoters say. Monopoly control of certain technologies, mergers and the continuous threat of mergers, control of credit, and other barriers to market entry make the system less free and less competitive. Economic discrimination, the relentless pursuit of profits, downsizing, and the manipulation and commercialization of people's fears make the system socially irresponsible and largely corruptive. "The market economy," says John Kenneth Galbraith, "accords wealth and distributes income in a highly unequal, socially adverse and socially damaging fashion."<sup>264</sup> Financial institutions and large corporations, just like the media, tend to escape moral scrutiny and bypass ethical standards, especially institutions that make a lot of money.

Meanwhile, corporate decisions to relocate or to expand production where labor is cheap and submissive, and where environmental regulations are weak and permissive have fueled competition among states. The desire of some to attract as many companies as possible has caused several problems associated with the early industrialization process in Europe to reappear and persist in many Third World and former communist countries, as well as in a few Western countries. These are serious problems that include the exploitation of child labor, trafficking in human beings, polluting the environment, increasing

health hazards, wasting natural resources, spreading slums and ghettos, and most importantly, the ghettoization of cultures and minorities. As a result, income inequality is widening and socio-cultural divides are deepening, causing upward mobility to become difficult and often morally hazardous. In a poor country like India, labor has become largely disposable. Workers are exploited until their utility is exhausted; then they are abandoned to live in filth and die of hunger and disease.

On the other hand, globalization of the world economy has enabled hundreds of millions of people worldwide to participate in and benefit from the new economy and its accomplishments. "The Internet is creating a unique shared global knowledge and communication space, the like of which has never existed before. In 1999, 196 million people spent over \$120 billion on line, and by 2003, 500 million will spend \$1.3 trillion."<sup>265</sup> People with money to spare, even members of the lower middle class who reside in faraway places, have gained an opportunity to invest in the world economy and reap some of its financial rewards. American statistics indicate that more than 50% of America's households in 1998 owned shares in corporate America and in other foreign corporations, and that about 25% of all wealth in the U.S. was invested in the stock market. These unprecedented developments make the responsibility of managing the world economy and making it more equitable an international one; no state, firm or group should escape accountability.

Equality of opportunity, which was promoted as an alternative to the utopian concept of total equality in society, can neither help the poor nor can it protect the needy. Michael Young argued in *The Rise of the Meritocracy* that equal opportunity serves to divide society into two groups. One is capable of seizing the opportunity offered to it, the other is incapable of doing so. Because of its inability, the second group finds itself moving downward and forming a lower, largely poor and neglected class. But, unlike any other lower class in history, this lower class is neither enslaved or oppressed, nor exploited, not even officially excluded. It is rather free yet excluded, has opportunities

yet remains poor, lives in an open society yet cannot move upward on the social ladder. It is, as a result, permanently left behind, deprived even of a cause to rally around.<sup>266</sup>

The formation of this class, however, is not the result of actions taken by the state, and therefore its conditions cannot be changed by state action only. Structural changes in the social and economic systems are needed to make it possible for this class to move upward and be included. The association of wealth with knowledge in the new society is probably the single most important factor contributing to creating this class and keeping it permanently behind.

People with knowledge, that is, people with advanced education and the right attitudes, have the capability to seize their opportunities, make money, and move upward; they even have the capability to create new opportunities for themselves to exploit. In addition, people with money have the resources to get the right knowledge and expand the range of opportunities open to them. In contrast, people with neither wealth nor knowledge are left behind, with nothing to enable them to compete in an increasingly complex world, where knowledge has become very important for gaining recognition as well as for making a decent living. "During this period of increasing income inequality, the value of a four-year college degree has dramatically increased. Those with one have continued to move ahead, those without one have fallen further behind."<sup>267</sup>

If equality of opportunity can neither lead to a fair distribution of income nor to socioeconomic mobility and the inclusion of all classes, then democracy cannot claim that it leads to a just society. Gross income inequality generates bad feelings among the majority of people and is more likely to discredit democracy in the long run. "Gross inequality in wealth is itself a social evil, which poisons life for millions."<sup>268</sup>

### **Intellectuals and the Poor**

In most cases in the past, voices representing the poor and the oppressed emerged and gained recognition and led often to the

alleviation of the suffering of the dispossessed. This was possible because societies were small, ethics were strong, and the misery of the poor was noticeable and intolerable. But with the advent of modern communications and the almost prohibitive cost of access to the media, the ideas of the rich and powerful have become prominent; they color every society's outlook and influence everyone's view of others. Dissent has largely been barred from the mass media and forced to move within closed circles. As a result, dissenting voices have adopted an attitude and a vocabulary that expresses more frustration and rejectionism than constructive engagement and optimism.

In fact, forces of rejectionism everywhere, on the left as well as on the right, in the rich countries as well as in the poor ones, seem today to be more aware of what they oppose, but unsure of what they stand for. The groups that demonstrated in Seattle, Washington DC, and Prague in 2000 against the policies of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization are, despite their good intentions, examples of such social forces.

The ever-widening socio-cultural gaps in society, along with the tendency of intellectuals to associate themselves with like-minded individuals who often belong to the upper classes, have caused the intellectuals and the masses to be separated. The life experiences of the two groups are growing increasingly divergent, as are their languages and outlooks. As a result, communications between the masses and non-traditional intellectuals is growing more difficult every day. This causes miscommunication and mutual mistrust to spread and deepen. While the masses are increasingly getting more doubtful of the honesty of intellectuals in general, intellectuals are increasingly getting more suspicious of the rationality of the masses in particular. This leaves the masses practically with no real leadership they can understand and trust, and leaves most intellectuals with no real causes they feel are worth fighting for.

Helping the poor in pre-industrial times was very useful to the rich; it enabled them to atone for their sins and feel closer to God in a deeply religious environment. Helping the poor in the industrial age

was also useful to the rich, particularly to owners and managers of large businesses; it enabled them to show generosity and social responsibility, claim superiority, and gain popularity in a nationalistic environment. In a knowledge society where individualism reigns supreme and ideology is becoming a thing of the past, and where globalism is the new frame of reference, neither helping the poor nor caring for community is seen of particular use to the rich. And because the poor can be isolated and are, in fact, being isolated, they can be ignored and largely forgotten; they no longer get the attention they deserve nor the compassion they need. In the not distant past, society used to care and give when it could, and ignore when it could not. Today, society ignores precisely when its ability to care and give is good and getting better.

### **A Future Global Outlook**

Social issues such as justice, freedom, human rights, and equality of opportunity are no longer domestic issues the nation-state can address on its own. They are issues that can be addressed only through the economic and infomedia processes that function in a global environment outside the realm of all states. These processes have enough power to manipulate any state and force most states to reshape national policy, sometimes against their will and contrary to perceived national interests. Today, every national problem, every national goal, and every challenge facing a nation, a group, or a corporation has an international dimension to it. Therefore, every nation, group, and corporation must think globally as it acts and plans locally. Otherwise, it will fail to find credible solutions to its problems and create a space in which it can pursue its goals and realize its aspirations.

Throughout history, knowledge has been more spiritual than materialistic, more liberal than restrictive, and more pluralistic than ideological. Because of these positive characteristics, the knowledge society and its knowledge elite, despite growing individualism, are expected to be more humanistic and more conscious of their pivotal global

position. The many foundations and non-governmental organizations committed to the protection of human rights and the environment, to helping the world poor, and to promoting peace are growing and gaining in power and stature. They have also demonstrated that as knowledge advances, class-consciousness and even national consciousness has increasingly been transformed into global consciousness.

The socio-cultural process, which has always been particular, is contributing today to social segmentation rather than to social harmony; the political process, which has always been nationalistic, is contributing to political fragmentation and, at times, to political disintegration rather than to unification. The economic process, meanwhile, is contributing to economic integration that causes corporate mergers and international business consolidation, oftentimes at the expense of smaller companies and the working class. And the infomedia process is contributing to economic and cultural globalization at the expense of local economies and national cultures. Change instigated by these forces is creating countless reasons to provoke conflict, which, in turn, induces equally countless reasons to accommodate change. The new world, consequently, is expected to be not only in a perpetual state of transition, but, strangely enough, also in a constant state of balance. The thousands and thousands of forces provoking conflict and causing change are likely to enable every society, especially knowledge societies, to transform itself without social revolutions or political upheavals.

Societies still living in the age of agriculture and in the early stages of the industrial age are expected to continue to witness conflict. Ethnicity, nationalism, and religion are forces fighting for survival and, therefore, are most likely to provoke conflict and cause war. However, future wars are expected to be limited in two ways:

1. They will be largely limited in scope and duration because the knowledge societies and the UN system of conflict management will not allow war to escalate beyond control or last very long.
2. They will be limited largely to states and among states living in the same ages, whose societies are behind the times. Such societies

have neither the economic resources nor the social homogeneity to sustain protracted, very expensive wars.

Other factors and changed situations that are expected to contribute to making the twenty-first century more peaceful and prosperous than past centuries include the following:

1. Decline of ideology in general and nationalism in particular. The collapse of Marxism around the year 1990 ended the age of ideology and ideological determinism, but activated ethnicity as a form of nationalism. Ethnicity, meanwhile, is causing cultural identities to contract and allegiance to the nation-state to weaken. People in general and the economic, media and knowledge elites in particular, are fast losing their national identities and with it the desire to fight. Most people in knowledge societies and others belonging to the global culture are increasingly becoming less attached to their states and less willing to defend its nationalist, often misguided zeal. In addition, no state today, especially democratic states living in the post-agricultural age, is able to define its "national interest" in terms that command the consensus of its ruling elite. All states have lost the organizing principles of their foreign policies, and every policy is challenged either on socio-cultural or economic grounds, or because of human rights considerations. And in light of socio-cultural fragmentation, most states have even lost the organizing principles of their societies.
2. Increased globalization that covers not only economics but also other spheres of knowledge and culture. Interests, which have triumphed over values, and universal values which are about to triumph over narrow ideology are linking the world's elites in many different ways, in business organizations, in research projects, in human and environmental concerns, and in professional associations. At the same time, globalization is facilitating the development of a global elite, whose interests can only be nurtured through the maintenance of peace, cooperation, and communications across cultures. In addition, the infomedia

process is expected to contribute towards this end through its involvement in promoting, among other things, democracy, human rights, and peaceful coexistence among nations.

3. The realization by most states in the world, especially the industrialized and the industrializing ones, that they are interdependent, and that international trade and foreign aid are means to expand their global reach. They also realize that economic growth and prosperity are functions of continued peace and increased cooperation, not of conflict and deepened ideological divides.
4. Goals sought traditionally by military means, such as access to natural resources and foreign markets, are accessible today through economic means as well as through foreign aid and investment opportunity. And when such means are used, access and the benefits it usually generates are more likely to endure and be mutual.
5. The spread of democracy and the increasing international acceptance of the democratic idea, even in states where nationalism and religion still predominate. Democracy complicates all national decisions, especially those related to international conflict and war; it makes elite and public consensus very difficult to reach and almost impossible to sustain for a prolonged period of time. In addition, it facilitates and legitimizes cultural diversity while making mutual recognition of minority rights palatable.
6. Learning the lessons of war. Wars have proven beyond doubt that fighting is horrible and painful, and that its consequences are severe and lasting. Weapons that the world already owns and others it is capable of producing can, if fully unleashed, destroy our planet and human life on it. Winning a war, moreover, is slowly becoming easier and less expensive than winning the peace that is supposed to follow.
7. The realization by all large and small world powers that the United States is the only superpower and, at the same time, the only power of its kind to prefer peace to war and to harbor no expansionist intentions. Statements to the contrary coming from

certain Third World leaders are meant for local consumption only. While the U.S. is very confident of its supreme global position, it exhibits a declining political will to initiate and fight wars.

As the age of knowledge advances, it expands our opportunities on the one hand and challenges our basic and most revered values on the other. By the year 2020, the new age of knowledge will have become dominant in several countries and within countless groups. Satellite communications will have become available everywhere, and sophisticated knowledge will be accessible to everyone who can afford it. People will have easy access to computers capable of computing in a second what takes humans today more than 250,000 years to compute. The mapping of the human genes will give us the ability to manipulate our own genes as well as those of plants and animals, thus enhancing our capacity to influence the physical characteristics and levels of intelligence of humans and animals alike. A new, very complex society, and a new, highly diversified culture will emerge, changing life's reality and people's perceptions of it drastically.

Dynamism and unpredictability, which characterize change today, make planning less effective, balances of relationships contingent, and both the state of living and the way of living fluid and difficult to define. As a result, a world in transition has emerged. No past experience is any longer able to explain the present or predict the future with certainty. Complexity, diversity and dynamism are the main characteristics of the new knowledge society. Complexity will cause systems to fail, forcing them to restructure continuously; and diversity will deepen socio-cultural divides and socioeconomic gaps, creating and recreating balances of power instantaneously. Dynamism, meanwhile, will make both change and conflict an unstoppable but largely unnoticeable process that affects human values, interests, and relationships at all levels, at all times. No ideology, no system, no plan, and no state, therefore, will be able by itself to manage change or dominate society or world affairs.

Theories of economic management and sociopolitical organization are invalidated, historical interpretations are reformulated, and social and political thinkers of the last few decades are marginalized. Claims that the trends of change that prevailed during the last 500 years should be expected to continue to shape the future are not only misguided but also harmful.<sup>269</sup> They confuse the present with the past and distort our perception of today's reality and tomorrow's image.

Philosophers of the recent past drew for us a comprehensive map that covered most terrains of life, some of which were difficult to draw and navigate. In doing what they did, they were influenced by history, ideology, war, and little else. The map, nevertheless, worked fairly well for decades because we continued to live in the same civilization, only minor modifications and some details were added. But recent changes instigated by the infomedia process and effected by the other three processes, particularly the economic one, are transforming reality in more profound ways than ever. As a result, the old map has become less helpful; and while it is still usable, it is no longer useful.

The framers of the old map are either changing their views painfully slowly or refusing to change them at all, and because of that, they are using a useless map. They still think that the forces of war, history, ideology and culture shape our destiny. In so doing, they are unwittingly encouraging discrimination, creating new hatreds, invoking collective memories of a fictitious past shaped by conflict, and falsifying people's consciousness. They, in fact, are undermining people's ability to relate to and deal with the new reality in a constructive manner.

The need today is for drawing a new map in which neither history nor ideology nor war plays a major role, a map capable of attracting the young people and inspiring the old ones. The new map should give hope to the poor and the disfranchised, added optimism to the rich, and a reason for everyone else to believe in it and trust its directions. It should highlight not war, history, or ideology, but our achievements in science and technology, in health care and education, in freedom and human rights, in cultural diversity and economic opportunity. It should also emphasize the need to protect the environment, to delegitimize the

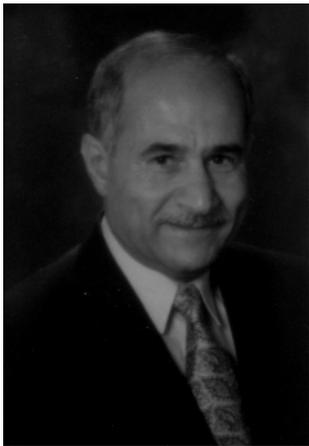
institutions of war, to revive social responsibility and raise it to new levels, to foster ethics and morality, to help the needy and include the excluded. Shared interests and common universal values should form the bases for a new world society.

“Though we obviously need science to understand how the global system works...many of our decisions will depend less on our science than on our values.”<sup>270</sup> Economic restructuring imposed or encouraged by the World Bank and the IMF, for example, is not sufficient to revive stagnant Third World economies. Economic restructuring needs to be accompanied by socio-cultural restructuring. “Sociology,” argues Lester Thurow, “almost always dominates technology. Ideas often lie unused because people do not want to use them,”<sup>271</sup> or, more correctly, because people fear the consequences of change on their cultures, as if cultures are supposed to have more rights than people do. Sustainability of economic development and peace can be achieved only in societies that value justice, believe in equality, and are free and respectful of human rights. George Fisher says, “We need to recognize that science and religion are each essential parts of what is to be human, and that if our vision of a sustainable future is to respond authentically to our humanity, our vision must be shaped by both.”<sup>272</sup>

Problems that inflict the poor and the less advanced societies should be addressed in a more humane way that seeks to change reality and people’s perception of it. The traditional concept of the nation-state must be modified and its prerogatives drastically curtailed so as to allow for the implementation of the shared homeland concept that gives all national and ethnic minorities the right to enjoy freedom and define their own identity. And as the democratic rich states make respect for human rights a condition for financial aid to needy countries, they should add the abandonment of armament to such conditions. In exchange for curtailing armament, the abiding states should be given enough guarantees that their security would be protected. Arms, in fact, do not protect lives, they end life; they do not enhance security, they increase fear.

States selling advanced military systems to other states living in the pre-industrial age should agree not to do so, and whichever state violates its commitment should be penalized. The UN, moreover, should be empowered to intervene to manage conflict before war erupts. If the prerogatives of the nation-state were to be curtailed, and if deserving minorities were to be given their legitimate rights, the need for arms to fight wars would be reduced substantially; in fact, the probability of war itself would become very small indeed. The people who work with and are engaged in the development of knowledge in particular are faced with a difficult challenge. They need to make themselves understood by those who have little knowledge, make knowledge accessible to those with little money to buy it, and make knowledge itself capable of addressing the particular needs of those who need it most but can afford it and use it least.

## About the Author



Dr. Rabie studied in Egypt, Germany, and the United States. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Houston and has taught at several Arab and American universities, including Kuwait University, Georgetown University, and The Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Rabie has published extensively in English and in Arabic. His eighteen books include, in English: *A Vision for the Transformation of the Middle East*; *The New World Order*; *Conflict Resolution and the Middle East Peace Process* and *Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity*; in both English and Arabic: *The US-PLO Dialogue* and *The Politics of Foreign Aid: US Foreign Assistance and Aid to Israel*; and about ten books in Arabic. In addition, he has published a short story, *A Journey With Worries*, and a book of poetry, *The Train of Time*, in addition to more than 50 papers in American, German and Arabic journals and over 400 newspaper articles.

Dr. Rabie has served as a board member of the Arab Fund for Technical Assistance for Arab and African Countries and a member of the steering committee of the Euro-Arab Dialogue. Currently, he is a member of the International Institute for Ethnic Group Rights and Regionalism, The Author's Guild, The Author's League of America, The Alexander von Humboldt Association of America, and the World

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Dr. Rabie has participated in tens of conferences, seminars, and dialogue meetings in more than fifty countries. Between 1989 and 1992, he was a member of both Harvard University and Brookings Institution working groups to advance peace in the Middle East, as well as a board member of the Search for Common Ground Middle East Initiative.

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