

OMNI NEWSLETTER #1 ON GLOBALIZATION, GLOBALISM, February 10, 2012. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice.

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This is a rudimentary introduction. Send me your recommended reading. D

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[I'd like to read what Greider says about the 2007-08 financial meltdown and recession.]

William Greider. *One World Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*. Simon and Shuster, 1997.

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Volume 9, Issue 2 / July - September 1997

From Asia to Zurich, there's no place to hide

One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism
By William Greider

Simon & Schuster

New York

Question: What do metalworking unionists in Zurich, Muslim women in Malaysia, and peasant-farmers-turned-aircraft-parts-makers in China have in common?

Answer: Like the rest of us, they are being swept up in a powerful process of social and economic transformation unleashed by the globalization of capitalism - a process that, depending on our collective willingness to control it, could lead to a worldwide economic collapse or to new heights of global prosperity.

That is the general thesis, at least, of a new book by William Greider, entitled *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*.

A respected if somewhat iconoclastic journalist whose previous books on

economics and politics have won numerous awards, Mr. Greider traveled extensively to gather facts and details - and especially to talk with individual workers and managers - in an effort to understand and explain how the rapid expansion of world markets and finance are affecting people and communities in virtually every nation, at all levels of society.

His conclusion (although no summary can really do justice to what Mr. Greider painstakingly lays out in 528 pages): that the globalization of business and enterprise is a revolutionary force - akin to the sort of transformations wrought in the past on a country-by-country basis by such developments as steam power, the assembly line, and/or the proliferation of the internal combustion engine - that is today remaking the world's entire social and political order.

"The essence of this industrial revolution, like others before it, is that commerce and finance have leapt inventively beyond the existing order and existing consciousness of peoples and societies," writes Mr. Greider, who is national editor at Rolling Stone magazine in the United States. "The global system of trade and production is fast constructing a new functional reality for most everyone's life, a new order based upon its own dynamics and not confined by the traditional social understandings. People may wish to turn away from that fact, but there is essentially no place to hide, not if one lives in any of the industrialized nations."

Although many books in recent years have pointed to similar themes and trends, what makes Mr. Greider's book especially interesting is the way he brings a reporter's eye to the subject. By visiting factories, union halls and homes around the world, he explores what effect the globalization of industry is having on the lives of individual people, giving a human face to the processes that others mostly theorize about.

That reporting, coupled with a sharp eye for big picture trends, brings home the book's central message: that we are indeed rapidly becoming "one world" - "ready or not." Assuredly, if there are still serious thinkers who have doubts about this process, the concrete details and close-up observations provided by Mr. Greider in this book will go far to help them visualize the real world impact of globalization, and especially to see that economic globalization cannot be had without similar transformations in the social, political and even spiritual realms.

For example, Mr. Greider visits an American-owned semiconductor factory outside Kuala Lumpur and observes how the surprisingly high technology jobs it has provided to Muslim women are gradually introducing major changes in their cultural life. While describing how young women in ankle-length dresses and traditional headscarves don spacesuit-like overalls to begin the exacting, clean room routine necessary to the manufacture of silicon chips, Mr. Greider quotes an American manager, Roger Bertelson, who describes how the process of recruitment and training and motivation for this sort of work required certain changes in regional social norms.

"We had to change the culture," Bertelson said, "because the Malay home does not encourage women to speak out. The daughter is supposed to have babies and take care of her husband. The idea was to break down the resistance to speaking out. We use positive reinforcement, just like you would work with school children. First, convince them that you are going to listen to them. Then we have them

stand up before their peers for recognition."

Or consider the changes in a remote Chinese village, where peasant farmers have been taught to produce world-class aircraft parts for Boeing. Although many of the workers at the Hongyuan Forging plant in Shaanxi Province still live in houses with thatched roofs and keep goats for the milk they produce, and although the factory they work in is located in a series of caves - a site chosen in the 1960s as a shelter from nuclear attack - they are able to produce high-tech titanium-alloy support struts for the engine mounts on new 747s.

Again, as is frequently the case in the book, some of the keenest insights come from the people that Mr. Greider quotes. "Since we have business with Boeing," says Kang Feng Zio, the factory's general manager, "this makes us upgrade our forgings so our technology is very close to the world standards... We intend to develop our company as the biggest in China, the biggest in East Asia. I think in this way - the way of the market - it won't be long before China will have great changes."

These two scenes also illustrate a central point of the book: that modern industrial techniques have in some ways empowered people everywhere - again, illustrating that we are one world. As Mr. Greider writes: "The global system of production is teaching a powerful lesson: people everywhere are capable, everywhere in the world. Every nation, especially the wealthier ones, promotes its own version of national arrogance, a natural self-centeredness that is very difficult to set aside. But global commerce undermines - and perhaps will someday destroy - the ancient, nativist stereotypes by which different peoples are ranked and rank themselves."

One downside of all of this is that for many workers in industrialized countries, the availability of so many capable people around the world tends to push wages down, in many cases leading to the elimination of their jobs. Mr. Greider illuminates the quandary faced by high wage workers when he visited a meeting of the International Metalworkers Federation in Zurich. Delegates from some 90 countries had gathered to celebrate 100 years of solidarity and to adopt an "action program" to confront global capitalism. But, writes Mr. Greider, their "reunion seemed more melancholy than celebratory, for it mainly delineated how the globalization of production has dismantled a century's work, the collective mobilization of workers."

The problem, writes Mr. Greider, is that as much as the unionists want to support the idea of solidarity with fellow metalworkers around the world, the fact that Asian workers are able and willing to accept much lower wages than their European and American counterparts, and that multinational companies are accordingly relocating factories from Europe and America to Asia as a result, has virtually destroyed the leverage that unions once had in fighting for higher wages and better working conditions.

Mr. Greider quotes an Asian financial analyst, Rodney Jones, who observes: "Where is it written that white guys in Britain are entitled to \$15 an hour and five weeks of holiday while Asians are supposed to work for \$3 a day... Asian workers are now part of the global economy and the West will simply have to adjust to this fact."

Mr. Greider also offers an extended economic analysis as to why and how these trends are happening. Some of this analysis is straightforward. Mr. Greider notes that investors and businesspeople, in their drive for an ever greater return on investment, have raced far ahead of governments and other regulatory institutions. Events ranging from the fall of Communism to the development of the Internet have opened new markets and accelerated the pace of business, and investors and corporations increasingly operate without regard to national borders or nationalistic loyalties.

But some of Mr. Greider's observations are more controversial. He argues, for example, that in their reach for global markets corporations may well have overextended themselves in many areas, building too many factories in the chase after too few dollars. The result of this over-capacity, Mr. Greider writes, could well be a global economic collapse.

In addition to the possibility of collapse, Mr. Greider finds other faults in unregulated global capitalism. He echoes those critics who say capitalists too often prosper at the expense of the poorest of the poor, those peoples and nations who have no hope of even getting into the race to make a high-tech aircraft part or a knock-off Walkman stereo tape player. And he is concerned that without consistent international standards for labor safety, the exploitation of workers on the next rung up will grow worse. In one chapter, he writes about workers in Thailand who, for \$2 or \$3 a day, make small stuffed toys for the American market in sweatshop conditions - conditions that in 1993 led to a horrific factory fire that killed some 188 people. Americans worry obsessively over the safety of their children, writes Mr. Greider, yet they took no "interest in the brutal and dangerous conditions imposed on the people who manufacture those same toys, many of whom were mere adolescent children themselves."

His prescription calls, first and foremost, for a general recognition that the world has become one, not only in its markets but also in the social and cultural effects that stem from its interdependence. He then calls for increased regulation of international financial markets - although he stops short of proposing any specific new institution or agency to do this, other than urging national governments to "reassert" their power to "regulate players in the global market" while at the same time "embracing the internationalist perspective."

He also calls for a number of specific measures, such as writing off entirely the debt that has been accumulated by poor nations, reforming central banks so that national monetary policy around the world emphasizes the needs of workers instead of "the prerogatives of stored wealth," and refocusing "national economic agendas on the priority of work and wages, rather than trade or multinational competitiveness." Mr. Greider also argues for a much increased push to "democratize" the ownership of corporations, principally through employee profit-sharing plans, which he believes could be a key tool for increasing worker involvement while maintaining international competitiveness.

From a Bahá'í point of view, Mr. Greider's work is important on several levels. First, his recognition of the world's oneness, and clearheaded argument that we must first and foremost recognize this fact, is an echo of what Bahá'ís have been saying for more than a hundred years.

Likewise, a number of his prescriptions parallel long-standing Bahá'í proposals. Bahá'ís have long promoted the idea of profit-sharing as a key tool for creating unity and justice between capital, management and labor. And his call for some kind of increased world governance or authority, halfhearted though it may be, is consonant with Bahá'í belief that our emerging world unity does indeed require equivalent structures for global governance at the international level.

At the same time, however, if there is a flaw to the book - beyond the various disputes over Greider's interpretation of economic theory - it lies in his presumption that it is merely the unleashed mathematics of deregulated economics and the market system that are causing the profound changes known collectively as "globalization."

From a Bahá'í point of view, this puts the cart before the horse. Bahá'ís would assert that the engine of change is driven not by economics but by the reality of human oneness, which is itself a spiritual process that has gradually become manifest over the last century.

Yet, toward the end of the book, Mr. Greider does come close to identifying the role that ethics, consciousness and spirituality have to play in understanding and, ultimately, healing the effects of globalization.

"Traveling around the world, between moments of euphoric wonder and dread I began to sense that a new ideology is struggling to be born - a new global consciousness...that is still weak and unformed, too undefined to even have a name," he writes. This consciousness, he writes, cannot be called socialism or even environmentalism, although it incorporates elements of both, nor can it be wholly expressed by the new ideas about justice emerging from feminist thinkers or the sense of global solidarity promoted by unionists. "The world's great religions might contribute important elements to this new way of thinking," he adds, "except their theologies still often reflect the tribalism that exalts faithful followers and demonizes nonbelievers."

Rather, he writes, a new global ideology would start "by accepting that, ready or not, we are all in this together." And, indeed, that is exactly right.

“Globalisation Unmasked” a review by Steve McGiffen of book by Petras and Veltmeyer, in: *Spectrezine*

[Book Review](#) James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century* (Zed Books, 2001) \$19.95

“Globalisation” is a term used with increasing frequency in the popular media, by activists in a range of organisations, and by politicians, yet discussion of its precise meaning has tended to be confined to academic circles, to economists and students of international relations. As John Kay said in the Financial Times recently (14/11/01) globalisation can sometimes mean anything and everything “that people hostile to the modern economy don’t like”. Though Kay writes from a measured but essentially conservative perspective, he has a point. Petras and Veltmeyer’s lively polemic, which seeks to show that globalisation is nothing but imperialism in a new dress, is therefore welcome, performing as it does

the difficult task of answering complex (and, indeed, often deliberately obscure) “pro-globalisation” arguments in a way which takes the dispute out of the halls of academe and within the reach of anyone able to think critically. In so doing, the authors have provided activists with an essential tool.

Petras and Veltmeyer’s argument is that “...the existing world economic order is in the process of being renovated so as to create optimal conditions for the free play of greed, class interest and profit-making.” They take issue with the presentation of globalisation as an inevitable process, “the only road available.” Globalisation involves a “widening and deepening of the international flows of trade, capital, technology and information within a single integrated market”, and each of these processes, as well as the precise form they take in the spreading of capitalist market relations and the culture which has grown from them to every corner of the world, are contingent upon decisions taken by human beings. Other decisions could have been taken and could yet be. Globalisation is politics in the service of a particular vision of economics, the result of a “consciously pursued strategy”. It demands “the liberalization of national and global markets” and without this liberalisation the growth of world trade would take on an entirely different pattern. This is an important distinction, because if globalisation is inevitable all we can do is try to adapt to it. If not, we can resist.

If globalisation depends on human decisions, then which particular humans are taking these decisions and in whose interests? The authors are clear on this point: transnational corporations (TNCs) are the motor and the beneficiaries. What is being created is a new international division of labour, new institutions to bypass democratic and other defensive forces, new means of exploiting opportunities provided by new technologies capable of reducing the costs of transport and communication to the point where Adam Smith’s famous “marginal advantage” gives way to a more absolute measure: put simply, cheap labour and repressive regimes have always provided suitable growing conditions for capitalist industry, but their advantages were traditionally offset by the huge costs involved in moving goods around the world, as well as the uncertainties of doing business at a distance which made rapid communications impossible. The telegraph and steam engine began to change those things. Email and jet aeroplanes, cheap fuel and advances in sea traffic of commodities have further “shrunk the world”. At the same time, other technological applications, coupled with the rise of the Reagan-Thatcher Axis and a newly aggressive approach from the core of capital, by raising labour productivity, in turn, of course, reduced the need for labour. The result was not, needless to say, the leisure society which the *Reader’s Digest* had promised us and slow-witted sociologists had fretted over in the 1960s, but mass unemployment.

The globalisers would tell us that this shedding of jobs was the inevitable result of opening up to competition from low wage countries. In response, western workers must accept lower rates of pay, deteriorating conditions and, above all, reduced job security. The only form of economic growth now available is that which derives from international trade and the movement of capital. This self-serving argument, as with all of globalisation’s fundamental tenets, rests on some dubious assumptions and no sound evidence whatsoever. In fact, in both the developed and developing world, the bulk of industrial output continues to serve domestic markets. Real trade remains local, regional, and only exceptionally global. Even TNCs make most of their profits domestically, though the extent of this predominance is

lessening.

As significant as the technological developments which made “globalisation” possible were political changes. The disappearance of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia removed economic alternatives to capitalism from much of the globe, while a complex of social developments provided the opportunity to weaken the labour movement. Working class parties, including arguably the most important, in Britain and Germany, were taken over by technocrats. Capitalism, even in the view of many on the left, became the only game in town.

Globalisation is a term which conjures up a world of mutual, and mutually beneficial, dependence, conforming to the vision of Adam Smith, who wished every country to be in a position where it could concentrate on what it was good at, trading with other nations to acquire those things which it found difficult or impossible to trade for itself. Smith would hardly have recognised any fulfilment of this benign vision in modern trade patterns, nor indeed would he have approved the essentially mercantilist imperialism of the TNCs and those politicians and institutions which serve their interests. What stops globalisation from being a Smithian project is quite simply that, whilst economic activity taken as a whole may be more internationalised than in the past, profits do not remain in the countries in which they are made, but flow north and west, a direction ensured by the continuing imbalance of power which underlies international relations and undermines any possibility of the sort of peacefully trading world which Smith believed could be built. Under these circumstances the new global division of labour represents not a liberation of the Third World from the limitations of primary production but, on the contrary, a predictable development of the rich countries exploitation of the poor. As Petras and Veltmeyer put it, “...globalization has deepened and extended the international division of labour. Cars...are made of parts from factories in distant nation-states. Information collection, processing and analysis are outsourced to workers in different regions...But this is a continuation of the past international division of labour...between mining and agricultural workers in the Third World and manufacturing and service workers in the imperial countries. What has changed is the inclusion of manufacturing activities in the former Third World.” In other words, all that has really changed is what the master requires of his slave.

If globalisation were more than this then we would expect to see a diversification of centres of wealth. Yet, as the authors show, US-based TNCs continue to strengthen their grip on global economic activity, with 70% of top firms based in the United States. Third World countries account for only 26 of the top 500, and increasingly the vital infrastructure of poorer nations is furnished by US corporations.

Dependence on foreign finance makes poorer countries peculiarly vulnerable to the vagaries of a world economy run as if it were a giant casino, as we have seen very recently in Argentina and earlier in Ecuador, Mexico, and numerous far eastern nations.

The globalisers’ arguments are often based on an admission that not all is rosy in the garden, that the process has losers as well as winners. This, however, tends to be explained away by short term difficulties and by claiming that, overall, the world is far better off. This utilitarian optimism is difficult to sustain. United Nations figures show that since 1980 the gap between richest and poorest has grown hugely: the richest fifth of the world’s population is now 17 times as wealthy as the poorest fifth. In

1980, the comparable multiple, scandalous enough, was 11. Of course, overall wealth has increased greatly in those two decades, but in sub-Saharan Africa and numerous individual countries elsewhere, real per capita incomes have fallen too.

As well as demonstrably false claims that globalisation is delivering the goods of poverty alleviation, supporters argue that it is leading to a spread of democracy. At first sight, this may seem more plausible, as the last two decades have seen a move away from openly dictatorial regimes and direct military rule towards civilian governments operating within a formal liberal democratic framework. “Good governance”, which is assumed to involve such an institutional and constitutional set-up, has even been made a condition of loans and aid from international financial institutions and rich nations. At the same time, however, not only has the West proved too ready to accept paper guarantees of ‘democracy’ as if they were the real thing, but the economic processes of globalisation, presided over by unaccountable international institutions, have seriously undermined the capacity of individual nation states to take their own decisions. This has the most damaging effects on the poorest countries, but the undermining of democracy is not confined to the Third World: NAFTA has locked Canadian citizens into a macro-economic framework which they can do little to change, whilst the introduction of a single currency under Maastricht Treaty rules has all-but eliminated parliamentary influence on core economic decision-making, even preventing elected governments from attempting to persuade the European Central Bank to change interest rates or any other aspect of its policies. Backing this up, TNCs routinely threaten to disinvest if governments don’t dance to their tune. When labour is withdrawn in pursuit of policy changes not directly linked to the immediate workplace, workers are accused of “holding the country to ransom.” When capital threatens the precise equivalent, governments are enjoined to be realistic and accept the inevitable.

This is not to side with those who argue, without, in general, feeling the slightest need to produce any evidence to back their assertions, that the nation state is now enfeebled, forced always to be at the beck and call of TNCs whose budgets may exceed those of medium-sized countries. On the contrary, as Petras and Veltmeyer argue, “never has the nation-state played a more decisive role...in shaping economic exchanges and investment at the local, national and international levels. It is impossible to conceive of the expansion and deepening involvement of multinational banks and corporations without the prior political, military and economic intervention of the nation-state.” The authors cite “...the vital political role of the imperial nation-states, particularly the US, in fuelling an arms race and subsidizing cultural and religious propaganda. The most elementary and important trade agreements...were formulated, codified and implemented by nation-states...The major policies stimulating vast tax windfalls, massive subsidies and lower domestic labour costs have all been formulated by the nation-state.” What has happened is that traditional sources of opposition have evolved from social democracy towards the gruesome “centre-left”, a non-movement which “has almost uniformly assimilated the globalist ideology...”

This book is recommended unreservedly for students of the subject and, above all, for activists seeking to equip themselves with arguments capable of blowing over the globalisers’ house of cards.

The reviewer, Steve McGiffen, is editor of Spectre and an environmental advisor to the European

Parliament's United Left Group. He recently published *The European Union: A Critical Guide* (Pluto Press, 2001) and is currently working on a brief book on globalisation for UK publisher *Pocket Essentials*.

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James Petras is a retired Bartle Professor (Emeritus) of Sociology at Binghamton

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In this new book, the entire **globalization** project is subjected to a powerful blast from the left.

James Petras and Henry **Veltmeyer** contend that **globalization** is not ...

First published in 2005. John Ralston Saul is already explaining that almost all of the reactions to the crisis which officially began in 2008 have been little more than that - reactions to the status quo. Most of them have made the mistake of thinking that the crisis was provoked by a financial crisis. Saul says this is not the case, and the crisis is far broader and far more profound. He believes that the more we react to the financial crisis the more we will freeze ourselves into the old globalist system, which is already on its way out.

The Collapse of Globalism has been re-issued with a major new conclusion, first in Great Britain in June 2009 with **Atlantic Books**.

Summary

Proponents of globalism predicted that nation states were heading toward irrelevance: that economics, not politics or arms, would determine the course of human events; that growth in international trade would foster prosperous markets that would, in turn abolish poverty and change dictatorships into democracies.

The successes of globalization include the astonishing growth in world trade and the unexpected "rise of India and China, which seem slated to become twenty-first-century superpowers. But its collapse has left us with a chaotic vacuum: the United States appears determined to ignore its international critics. In Europe problems such as racism, terrorism, and renewed internal nationalism call for uniquely European solutions born out of local experiences and needs. Elsewhere, the world looks for answers to African debt, the AIDS epidemic, the return of fundamentalism, and terrorism, all of which perversely refuse to disappear despite the theoretical rise in global prosperity.

Insightful and prophetic, **The Collapse of Globalism** is destined to take its place as one of the seminal books of our time.

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Books; /; Author: **John R. Saul** **The Collapse Of Globalism** Revised Edition ... In 1999, John Ralston Saul began predicting that globalism would collapse.

Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd Ed. Oxford UP, 2009.

Rev. by Dick Bennett

In Contents Steger announces five main dimensions of globalization: economic (Ch. 3), political (Ch. 4), cultural (Ch. 5), ecological (Ch. 6), and ideological (Ch. 7).

However, in his Preface (ii, my paging) he denotes six: these plus technology in the service of all. Steger also recognizes that the meaning of globalization is contested by “power interests,” which he examines particularly as ideology in Ch. 7.

Also in the Preface (iii), Steger openly declares his “critical approach” to be one of “skepticism” toward “market globalization.” It is not a “blanket rejection of either markets or globalization” but an objection to certain liabilities in globalization. What he seeks is the expansion of freedom, justice, equality, and compassion “for *all* people, especially those living in the global South” and “protection and preservation” for “our planet.” “...my critique is not directed at globalization per se, but at particular manifestations and tendencies that strike me as falling short of the noble vision of a more just and compassionate global order.”

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4 reviews

Mar 10, 2010 – **Manfred B. Steger** is Professor of Global Studies and Director, Globalism ... Fellow , **Globalization** Research Center, University of Hawai'i-Manoa.

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At the same time, **globalism** has already encountered serious ideological challengers

Manfred B. Steger is professor of politics and government at Illinois State ...

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10. [Globalism: The New Market Ideology, \(074250073X\), Manfred](#)

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BARNES & NOBLE: Globalism: The New Market Ideology by Manfred B. Steger ... **Manfred B. Steger** is professor of politics and government at Illinois State ...

Chris Hedges, *The World As It Is*. Truthdig/Nation Books, 2010. “The power elite...cling to the disastrous principles of globalization and its outdated language to mask the political and economic vacuum before us. The absurd idea that the market-place alone should determine economic and political constructs caused the crisis. It led the G-20 to sacrifice other areas of human importance—from working conditions, to taxation, to child labor, to hunger, to health and pollution—on the altar of free trade.” (p. 286, where he quotes Saul, Penguin 2009 ed. pp. 291-2).