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Author(s): Smith, Nathan.

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From Printing to Nation-States, from Internet to Neo-Medieval Globalism

NATHAN SMITH

The thesis tentatively advanced here is that the internet is reshaping the human conversation and the structure of people's imagined communities, making them at once more niched and more global, but, at any rate, less national. In important ways, it is *reversing* the reshaping of the human conversation once wrought by the advent of printing. Prior to the advent of printing, people lived in many imagined communities, from local ones like villages and guilds to quasi-universal ones like Christendom, with none of these levels enjoying a clear primacy. Printing led to the rise of nationalism, and as printers targeted local mass markets, text and literacy reached the middle classes and then the masses. Soon after, reading publics developed national consciousness. Nations displaced or subordinated other forms of community, and nationality displaced or subordinated other forms of identity. The tendency of print to foster nationalism arose from the economic properties of printing as a medium of communication. The high fixed costs and low marginal costs of printing make it suitable for profit-driven production of large numbers of identical books for mass consumer markets, and these reading publics coalesced into nations.

Today, the internet makes even more text available to even more readers, yet in some respects, the new economics of texts resembles the age of the medieval manuscript. Transactions costs for payment are high, since few will bother with an online credit card payment to read an online article. This gives an advantage to institutional, purpose-driven, pro bono text producers, who are willing to supply online content to readers for free, over profit-driven text producers who prioritize what the consumer is willing to pay for. Profit-driven online publishing exists, of course, but its influence on how the human conversation develops is less preponderant today, and was less preponderant in the Middle Ages, than it was in the age of print. Meanwhile, relatively low distribution and storage costs give writers an incentive to use a *lingua franca*—Latin in medieval times, English today—so as to reach international audiences and posterity. The internet makes text production more diffuse, blurs the distinction between writing and reading, and enables people to find niches where others share their interests

and opinions, while rendering them more independent, socially and intellectually, of their immediate neighbors.

Politically, the dawn of the internet age was marked by the flaring up of an international protest movement ostensibly opposed to globalization. As such, it proved remarkably transient. After erupting in Seattle in 1999 and climaxing in Genoa in 2002, it faded out swiftly, so that the IMF, World Bank, and WTO are now able to meet without physical resistance. Ironically, the “anti-globalization” movement may prove to have been the harbinger of a type of globalist politics that will prevail in the age of the internet. As the internet, and social media, knit together a globalized civil society, national imagined communities will gradually be eclipsed by new forms of community that are more voluntarily chosen, overlapping and interpenetrating one another, such as the non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, that have become increasingly influential in development and advocacy. Globalization will continue, deepen, and gain legitimacy, and political contestation will occur within its framework. Institutions like the UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO, and others that may be established, which have at least a tenuous claim to represent the whole human race, and which have a certain authority as champions and expositors of a universal neo-liberal creed, will enjoy increased power and influence. A diffuse voluntary sector will sometimes cooperate and sometimes resist. The older political structures of the nation-state will experience growing internal dissension and face new challenges to their prerogatives.

As the internet and social media shape first the human conversation, then the imagined communities in which people live, we can look forward to a productive tension between “sovereign” nation-states and a globalized civil society, for which the High Middle Ages, a time of tension between the universal Catholic Church and an array of secular kings, may serve as an illuminating analogy. If printing gave rise to the nation-state, the internet may be leading us into an age of neo-medieval globalism.

A Brief History of Communication

Victor Hugo’s novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is set in the waning years of the Middle Ages. At one point, a character in the novel sees a printed book and utters the cryptic prophecy: “The book will kill the edifice.” His colleagues think he is mad, but Hugo explicates his character’s thought in a long, strange digression that turns into a sweeping and insightful history of commu-

nication. The first thesis is that the printing press catalyzed the Reformation, or as Hugo more eloquently puts it:

In the first place, [“The book will kill the edifice”] was a priestly thought. It was the affright of the priest in the presence of a new agent, the printing press. It was the terror and dazzled amazement of the men of the sanctuary, in the presence of the luminous press of Gutenberg. It was the pulpit and the manuscript taking the alarm at the printed word: something similar to the stupor of a sparrow which should behold the angel Legion unfold his six million wings. It was the cry of the prophet who already hears emancipated humanity roaring and swarming; who beholds in the future, intelligence sapping faith, opinion dethroning belief, the world shaking off Rome. It was the prognostication of the philosopher who sees human thought, volatilized by the press, evaporating from the theocratic recipient. It was the terror of the soldier who examines the brazen battering ram, and says:—”The tower will crumble.” It signified that one power was about to succeed another power. It meant, “The press will kill the church.”

By now, it is almost conventional wisdom that the printing press catalyzed the Reformation. A century before Luther, Jan Hus defied the Catholic Church, and for some years after Hus was put to death, a Hussite rebellion smoldered in Bohemia, but it did not spread or endure. But the Lutherans, with the printing press to spread their message, were far more successful. Hugo’s thesis about the printing press is now widely accepted, (e.g., see Cole (1984)) but Hugo has a second, more ambitious thesis:

[But also] it was a presentiment that human thought... was about to change its mode of expression; that the dominant idea of each generation would no longer be written with the same matter, and in the same manner; that the book of stone, so solid and so durable, was about to make way for the book of paper, more solid and still more durable. In this connection the archdeacon’s vague formula had a second sense. It meant, “Printing will kill architecture.”

In fact, from the origin of things down to the fifteenth century of the Christian era, inclusive, architecture is the great book of humanity, the principal expression of man in his different stages of development, either as a force or as an intelligence.

When the memory of the first races felt itself overloaded, when the mass of reminiscences of the human race became so heavy and so confused that speech naked and flying, ran the risk of losing them on the way, men transcribed them on the soil in a manner which was at once the most visible, most durable, and most natural. They sealed each tradition beneath a monument... Not only the form of edifices, but the sites selected for them, revealed the thought which they represented, according as the symbol to be expressed was graceful or grave. Greece crowned her mountains with a temple harmonious to the eye; India disembowelled hers, to chisel therein those monstrous subterranean pagodas, borne up by gigantic rows of granite elephants... During the first six thousand years of the world, from the most immemorial pagoda of Hindustan, to the cathedral of Cologne, architecture was the great handwriting of the human race. And this is so true, that not only every religious symbol, but every human thought, has its page and its monument in that immense book...

Among other things, this passage is a forceful reminder of the importance of unwritten communication to the shaping of the pre-modern mind. Literacy has usually been the preserve of a minority, whereas everyone can feel awe at the sight of a pyramid or a cathedral. The visual arts—paintings, stained-glass windows, sculptures, and so on—and music always existed alongside text, and were sometimes more important. In the Middle Ages, icons, statues, stained-glass windows, and magnificent churches educated the illiterate medieval peasantry in the Catholic faith. The abbot Suger of St. Denis (1081-1151), strangely enough from a modern perspective, invented Gothic architecture as a way of expressing the Neoplatonist philosophy as conveyed by (the supposed) Dionysius the Areopagite. Architectural styles supply periodizations of history, e.g., the Romanesque and the Gothic, and to a lesser extent, the Renaissance and the Baroque. The last two periods, which were as much artistic (the Renaissance) and musical (the Baroque) as architectural, came after the print revolution, but

before mass literacy had taken hold. The Enlightenment (which overlapped the Baroque) and Romantic eras are defined by their great books. Today, architecture has become largely utilitarian, and famous buildings are usually old. In the heyday of print, books were the prime shapers of the popular consciousness.

A shrewd scholar in 1900 might have had a similar premonition to that of Victor Hugo's archdeacon, foreseeing that radio and TV would kill the book. For decades, much of the world's population has spent much of its free time watching TV, and the telephone made spoken communication possible over long distances. If the great serialized novels of the 19th century, such as Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*, or Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, have a counterpart today, it is not any novel, but a TV show like *24* or *The Simpsons*. The 1960s are defined by their music, and to a lesser extent, by certain great films, far more than by any books written at that time. Since then, popular music has lost its prophetic force. There are no modern analogues of Bob Dylan. If there is a medium in which the "dominant idea of each generation" is expressed today, it may be the website. The internet, in contrast with radio and TV, began as a text technology, but as connection speeds have gotten faster, it has become a major conduit for photos, videos, and music. Today's cultural history is probably best periodized by the advent of great websites: we live in the Age of Facebook.

While non-written communication has been important for the masses, text has always been the dominant vehicle for the accumulation and preservation of knowledge. In the history of text itself, there have been a few technological transitions. First, the scroll gave way to the book at about the time when paganism gave way to Christianity. The book has the advantage of "random access," i.e., you can open it anywhere. Second, papyrus scrolls gave way to parchment and then to paper. Third, somewhere along the way, a largely silent transition from reading aloud to reading silently took place. Fourth, and most important, is the advent of printing. But the rise of the internet is probably as important as the rise of printing.

The internet has spawned several new forms of textual communication, including email, blogs, tweets, Facebook feeds, wikis, and discussion forums. The physical book, after a nearly 2,000-year ascendancy as the chief home of knowledge, has been swiftly reduced to obsolescence. The internet and Kindle's e-library contain far more information than the ancient Library of Alex-

andria ever did, and makes it readily available, at any time, to any person with a smartphone, which means almost everyone in the developed democracies of the West, and rapidly growing numbers of people in developing countries as well. The quantity of text is perhaps less important than its searchability. After all, it has been two or three centuries at least since there has been more text than anyone can read, but this abundance does a person little good if they can't find the text that answers their question. A Google search has become the preeminent way of fetching information.

There has been a great democratization in the production of text, too. Today, anyone can write a blog and publish his or her thoughts to the world, for free. Of course, finding readers is not as easy, and there is an online elite arising from the mysterious, spontaneous distribution of eyeballs among webpages, of which some are almost completely unread while a few attract millions of viewers every day. However, many blogs have risen to fame from obscurity without much help from the traditional gatekeepers of the publishing world. Business writers with a knack for statistics have also noted a phenomenon called the "long tail," meaning that in the statistical distribution of, say, blog readership, or product sales, the market share of the biggest players is often outnumbered by the combined market share of numerous smaller players. The internet has given the human conversation a more decentralized and niche-filled structure.

The Economics of Text

As Victor Hugo understood, the historical effect of new text technologies is largely a function of economics. Underlying the metaphorical "marketplace of ideas" is a literal marketplace of manuscripts, printed books, or websites. Authors must make a living somehow, and prices and logistics affect who reads what, and therefore which minds are changed, and how. So to forecast the effect of new media, we first need some insight about the cost characteristics of different text technologies.

Economic activities typically have inputs and outputs, and various cost concepts are used to characterize the relationships between them. For example, printing a book (I am simplifying somewhat) requires a printing press—capital—and a lot of time to set up the mold for the pages—labor. These are called fixed costs, because they do not depend on the size of the print run. In addition, each copy of a book printed requires further labor, as well as paper and ink.

These are called marginal costs, because they accumulate at the margin. If fixed costs are substantial and marginal costs are relatively constant, then average costs, the sum of all fixed and marginal costs divided by the quantity produced, are falling as the size of the print run increases. Falling average costs are also called economies of scale. Once production is complete, there are further costs of distributing books, storing books until they are sold or otherwise used, and conducting transactions with book buyers.

Costs depend on technology, and Table 1 gives a rough, schematic description of the cost structures in the production and distribution of text in the medieval (manuscript) and modern (print) epochs, as well as in the age of the internet. In the Middle Ages, the marginal cost, in labor, of producing a book was very high, since books had to be copied by hand. Most other costs were low by comparison. Text production tended to be dominated by institutions, especially the Church, or dependant on aristocratic patrons.

Printing made it possible to make and sell books at low prices, but only with large print runs. High fixed costs discouraged niche or custom publishing. Distribution and storage were no more expensive than before, but they were much more relatively expensive, because production costs were so low. So distribution networks limited the geographic reach of many books, and older books often went out of print. While printing vastly increased the number of books made, and high-quality reading material became available to the masses, the selection was still limited by the high-fixed costs of launching a print run, as well as by problems of distribution. Moreover, the role of some medieval copyists as “glossators,” who wrote in the margins of texts, or between the lines, to explain unfamiliar words and reconcile apparent contradictions, disappeared. All copies of a book were identical, and readers became passive receptacles of what publishers sold them.

The medieval glossator has an interesting counterpart in the modern blogger, who publishes excerpts of other texts, adding commentaries that integrate them into a coherent worldview. Some of today’s leading public intellectuals, such as Tyler Cowen, Glenn Reynolds, Andrew Sullivan, Scott Sumner, and Matthew Yglesias, rose to prominence through the blogosphere, while others, such as Paul Krugman, became famous through traditional scholarly channels, but then took to blogging for the sake of the freedom and influence it provides. Some

Table 1: How the economics of text technologies structures the human conversation

Production costs	Medieval manuscripts	Printing	Internet
Fixed (capital)	Modest: ink, parchment	High: must own a printing press	Low: computer, internet connection
Fixed (labor)	N/A	High: must mold each page	Modest: formatting for the web
Marginal	Very high: books must be copied by hand	Low: after setup costs, mass production is cheap	Negligible: once posted, all can read
Distribution and storage	Relatively low: texts are disseminated widely and kept available	Relatively high: most texts are distributed locally, then go out of print	Negligible: everything anyone writes is permanently available everywhere
Transactions costs for reader payment	Relatively high: institutions usually pay	Relatively low: readers' willingness to pay drives publishing	Relatively high: sponsors and advertisers pay, or text is produced pro bono
Price of texts	High	Low	Free
Quantity of texts	Limited	Plentiful, but a limited selection available to most readers	Almost inconceivably vast and diverse
Market structure	Dominated by the Church	Publishers with large print runs	Decentralized and niche-filled: most reading occurs in the "long tail" of the distribution
Interactivity	Some: glossators write notes in margins	None: books are fungible, readers are passive receptacles	Easy and abundant: comment sections, blogs, chat rooms, social media

blogs, such as the Brothers Judd (www.brothersjuddblog.com) primarily link to and quote other texts, adding only a few words of their own commentary to each post. This raises the question of why readers read the blog, instead of the sources, which are usually just a click away. A major reason seems to be that the reader is familiar with the blogger, knows and trusts his or her perspective, and prefers either to read texts filtered for consistency with a worldview they

accept, or else to be armed by their favored blogger with refutations of any texts they may disagree with. Bloggers, like glossators, satisfy a demand for coherence and consistency in a world made confusing by the chaotic diversity of voices. Readers of blogs can also add their own comments, but even the blogosphere seems to have declined in recent years, eclipsed by “micro-blogs” like Facebook and Twitter.

The comparative interactivity of both the internet age, with its teeming comments sections, and the Middle Ages, with its glossators writing in the margins of the books they were copying, stand in striking contrast with the age of print, when consumers were passive receptacles, reading identical, mass-manufactured copies of exactly the same text. Yet, in another way, consumers had more power in the age of print than they do today, and the subtle reason for this relates to transaction costs in the book market.

A book maker incurs costs. The readers enjoy benefits. In principle, the readers should be willing to pay for the benefits. If the reader’s willingness to pay is greater than the book maker’s cost, the book should be made. If not, then not. Supply and demand should, in principle, motivate text producers to produce the text that people want to read. In the age of print, this was more or less true. Profit-driven publishing was the norm. This was possible because bookselling was the main transmission mechanism for text, and it is straightforward for a bookseller to collect a payment. So what was printed depended on what the consumer wanted to buy. In the words of Adam Smith: “the consumer is king.” Readers could not talk back, but they enjoyed consumer sovereignty.

By contrast, in the Middle Ages, books were too expensive to be often purchased by individuals for their own pleasure, and institutions, such as churches and monasteries, which could share books among many individuals, and pass them down through the generations, played a larger role in book markets. What books were made therefore depended more on ecclesiastical or aristocratic patronage than on consumer demand. Surprisingly, this feature of the medieval book market has reappeared in the modern internet. It is hard to get people to pay to use websites. Few people today have such a low value of time that an article worth reading is not worth paying 10 to 20 cents for, but pulling out a credit card to pay (a), wastes a valuable minute of time, and (b), involves a security risk, since internet users are wisely wary about entering their credit card information into unfamiliar websites. So internet users tend to insist on

free content. The clumsy solution to the problem is advertising, and annoyed readers end up closing pop-ups or scrolling away from sponsored content, but perhaps occasionally seeing something they want, and justifying the advertising dollars that finance the sites they are reading. But the internet age gives an advantage to websites that are produced on a pro bono or volunteer basis, or which have institutional sponsorship, so that they can keep their content available for free.

Another parallel between medieval manuscripts and the internet is that both favor a *lingua franca* over vernaculars. Early estimates of the global market share of English in internet content put it at 80%. That proportion has certainly fallen as internet use has spread worldwide, and Pimienta, Prado, and Blaco (2009) estimate English content at 45% today, while guessing that the true figure is under 40%, which is still far ahead of other languages, and enormously disproportionate to the 5.4% of humanity whose native language is English. English is the new Latin, the great textual language, the language of an international intelligentsia, the medium of the best argument and information.

Why? Because today, as in the Middle Ages, the relative cost of distribution and storage of texts is low compared to the cost of producing them, so it is easy to reach mass audiences, if only one is writing in a widely-understood language. Most medieval writers—Dante, who wrote in the Florentine dialect of Italian, and the troubadours, who wrote in Old Provençal, were exceptions—preferred Latin, because vernaculars were local and ephemeral, and vernaculars were local and ephemeral, because medieval writers preferred Latin. A paucity of books reduced the opportunity and the incentive to become literate in vernacular languages if one did not have the resources to learn Latin, and without books and schools to fix vocabularies and grammars in place, the vernaculars varied from town to town and generation to generation. Latin gave access to an international, albeit an elite-only, audience, and ensured that works could be read by posterity. Printing made it less important to be read internationally or by posterity, for printed books could make a quick profit from, and have a rapid effect on, large local audiences. The profit motive drove a shift from Latin into the vernaculars, and the proliferation of literature in the vernaculars homogenized and elevated them into the great modern European languages. For a long time, Latin was still better known internationally than national languages like English or French, and some authors wrote in Latin for elite audiences—Isaac

Newton wrote the *Principia Mathematica* in 1687 in Latin, for example—but such long-distance circulation of books was expensive, and the profit motive tended to push text producers towards English, French, and German.

Today, when anything published online is automatically available to the whole world, text producers face the opposite pressures. They can reach the whole world, but only if they write in English. The vast supply of English on-line content increases the means and opportunity to learn the web's dominant language. An intriguing possibility suggests itself, that non-English languages might be reduced to a status like that of the medieval vernaculars, abandoned by the intelligentsia, and thereby deprived of sophisticated vocabulary, prescriptive grammar, and sometimes degenerating into slang, while at other times being colonized by English loan-words. Perhaps most importantly, the age of print removed what is sometimes called “the long tail,” (Anderson, 2006A). The “long tail” of a statistical distribution is the many small entities that together may be much larger than the largest entities. Thus, if a printer publishes 100 books, and rejects 10,000, the rejected 10,000 may well have sold more copies, and created more reader satisfaction, than the printer's 100 top picks, had they been published. But high fixed costs mean the printer cannot print a few copies of 10,000 different books. The result is a “few-to-many” distribution structure. But the 10,000 books can easily be published in cyberspace. The result is a wider selection and happier readers, but also endless diffusion, diversity, and decentralization. Social media accelerate this trend. Facebook epitomizes “mass customization” and makes everyone a published writer. It is an apt symbol of the contrast between the age of print and the age of the internet. The internet has given rise to a “many-to-many” structure for the distribution of text, which may have major geopolitical ramifications, if Anderson (2006B) is right that the rise of the nation-state was a side-effect of “print capitalism.”

Imagined Communities

In the contemporary world, everyone is still thought to have a nationality almost as everyone has a gender. We have even forgotten that this is odd. Part of the confusion arises because race and native language really are almost as fundamental as gender, but neither race nor native language is synonymous with nationality. To 19th century nationalists fighting to reunite Germany or liberate Ireland, the idea that a benighted past was giving way to a more rational

future, in which one people had one government, came naturally. In a longer, historical perspective, the naturalness of desiderata like Irish independence or German unity for certain generations is just what needs explaining. After all, medieval Europeans rarely found the cause of national independence and unity worth fighting for, or even intelligible, while in the early 21st century, many contemporary Europeans are embarrassed by their former nationalism and desire to submerge hard-won national independence in an “ever closer union” of Europe.

Nationality today is the political fact of membership in a particular state. If, as Aristotle claimed, “man is a political animal,” might nationality, as membership of a state, be almost as necessary and fundamental to human identity as gender, race, and language? No. History reveals that the identification of nationality with membership of a state, and the partitioning of the population and territory of the whole globe into nation-states, are quite recent developments. As recently as World War I, most of the world consisted of multinational empires, migration was largely unrestricted, and class and race were as important to human identity as nationality or citizenship, which in turn would rarely be identified with each other. However, the transition to a world of nation-states was already well underway. Most of the world’s leading powers in 1914 were organized as nation-states, with Britain and France priding themselves in national histories going back to the Middle Ages, while Germans and Italians had sought national unification in the 19th century, and some form of this desideratum had been achieved through the power politics of older dynastic states. Dynastic multinational empires were widely perceived as backward and archaic. When Woodrow Wilson, after WWI, sought to rebuild a shattered world on the basis of “national self-determination,” he would help to catalyze decades of chaotic, revolutionary transformation, first in Eastern Europe, then in the post-colonial Third World, but if Anderson (2006B) is right that nationalism arose from print capitalism, Wilson may only have been accelerating a long-term trend.

Nationalism was linked with democracy, as it would later turn out to be with socialism, despite the ideological internationalism of Marx and other socialist theoreticians. The phrase “rule of the people,” which can equally have a democratic meaning (the people vs. kings and aristocrats), a nationalist meaning (the people vs. other peoples), or a socialist meaning (the people vs. rich and

capitalists) neatly elucidates the inherent links between the three. The association of nationalism with the political “right” and of socialism with the political “left” is misleading. The widespread advent of democracy in late 19th century Europe led to the decline of international capitalism, as it was curtailed by larger governments that were at once more national and more socialist, regardless of whether they called themselves communist, fascist, or democratic. Auktarkic isolationism has a perennial appeal for the nationalist mind, but it leads to economic inefficiency and geopolitical instability, as the world painfully learned in the Great Depression and World War II. However, the post-war West was able, for a while, to use military alliances and limited economic integration to achieve peace and prosperity within relatively closed national communities. Meanwhile, the new nationalisms that had been emerging under colonial rule began to attain independence. By the 1980s, Wilson’s idea of a world of nation-states seemed largely realized.

Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, 2006B) offered the most influential explanation of the continual popular drive for national self-determination in the modern world. He explains how modern nationalism arose from “print capitalism.” Anderson’s title calls nations “imagined communities,” but he does not mean they are imaginary. People who think they are a nation, are one, in reality. The way people imagine the world matters to them, so it matters to history. That said, Anderson is pointing out that various more “real” or “objective” definitions of nationality which might be suggested, fail to generalize. Language does not work; it can explain the unity of Czechs and Italians, but not why Switzerland is one nation, or why the English-speaking nations—the USA, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—are six. Race does not work, since the USA and India are racial rainbows, while a dozen distinct northern European nations exhibit no discernible racial differences. History does not work, since long union didn’t make the Irish feel English, while centuries of city-state independence did not prevent 19th century Italians from feeling a shared nationality. Religion does not work, since the USA is religiously diverse, while Spain, Italy, Ireland, and so forth do not comprise a single Catholic nation. Sovereignty does not work, for subject nations aspire to gain separate sovereignty, while pieces of divided nations aspire to lose it. The search for some deeper essence of nationality fails, leaving us with the conclusion that people who think they are a nation, are.

A people's need for imagined community long predates modern nationalism. The lives of people in the Middle Ages were embedded in a wide variety of imagined communities, including guilds, monasteries and religious orders, universities, feudal hierarchies, dynastic kingdoms, and overarching all, the Catholic Church. Anderson stresses that nationalist writings are full of love for their countries, and that people in the 20th century proved themselves ready "not so much to kill as to die" for their countries, more than for any other cause. In the Middle Ages, men loved, fought, and died for Christendom and the Church—especially in the Crusades—or for their kings and feudal lords. Personal and local ties were probably more important in medieval times than the modern age of urban industrialization, but what we might call "international" loyalties, to the Roman Catholic Church or the Holy Roman Empire, were also more important. The very word "international," however, betrays our modern bias to emphasize the national unit. The word "catholic"—meaning universal—better expresses medieval sensibilities, which saw the community of Christendom as at least as real and organic as any nascent national political units that might exist under its aegis.

If the idea that nations are "imagined communities" is accepted, it remains to explain why, in modern times, national imagined communities eclipsed other kinds of imagined communities. Anderson explains this novelty by looking to the rise of the reading public as the nursery of nationhood. Profit-driven publishers learned to connect with their readers, and therefore connected their readers with one another. Newspapers created, among their readerships, a sense of the immediacy and urgency of events, as well as of the permanence of the community itself, of which the readers were a part. They created a sense of a collectivity moving through time but remaining itself. Novels were written, in an unprecedentedly intimate style, to an implicit audience, an audience that shared certain assumptions and circumstances, that knew certain place-names and had certain customs, in short, to a nation. While a common language is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for shared nationality, the literary transition to the vernacular was obviously important. Erasmus (1466-1536), the cosmopolitan intellectual who still wrote in Latin, was succeeded by Luther (1483-1546), who translated the Bible into German, and Shakespeare (1564-1616), who laid the foundations of an English national literature. But the crucial element was not language per se, but the way printed literatures shaped

the human conversation. As modern literature eclipsed classical and medieval texts, the circulation of these literatures helped define the boundaries of a community, eclipsing both more local, feudal loyalties and more abstract, universal ones. Language barriers and political frontiers impeded the circulation of text, but more fundamentally, the economics of printing oriented writers to local and immediate mass markets. It discouraged writing for the ages, since, as Jonathan Swift (1712) complained, the national languages were still changing, and might not be intelligible to future generations. Text reached downwards into classes it had never before touched, and began to soften class distinctions, but it ceased to reach across national, political, and linguistic boundaries, or backwards and forwards in time, as easily as it had once done.

Today, the primacy of national imagined communities may be giving way to a more stratified, complex, voluntarist web of overlapping and interpenetrating imagined communities, more like that of the Middle Ages. Recent books like *Coming Apart* (Murray, 2012), *Our Kids* (Putnam, 2015), *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 1995), and *The Big Sort* (Bishop, 2009), highlight the increasing stratification and self-segregation of American society, and the decline of a sense of national community. At the same time, social networking sites enable people to revive and strengthen social ties and meet new people, without regard to national boundaries. A recent study of the global social network that is Facebook (Ugander et al., 2011) found that 84% of links between “friends” are within the same country. While this implies that social networks are still mainly intra-national, it almost certainly represents an internationalization of social networks relative to, say, the 1950s and 1960s. Epidemiologists estimate that between 70% and 95% of a population needs to be immune to a contagious disease before it acquires “herd immunity.” It seems likely that, in the heyday of print capitalism and nation-states, nations had a sort of “herd immunity” to foreign ideas, whereby an open-minded few who might have listened to them, would simply never have heard them, whereas today, with foreign media sources only a click away and 16 percent of people’s Facebook friends living abroad, they have lost it. Ideas move easily across political frontiers, and public opinion is less national in character.

Table 2: How text technology shapes imagined communities and politics

Table 2: How text technology shapes imagined communities and politics

Text technology	Structure of the human conversation	Imagined communities	Geopolitical organization
Manuscript	A <i>lingua franca</i> (Latin) united a literate, orthodox, largely clerical elite across space and time. Most other communication is oral and local.	The Catholic Church was the overarching community, plus religious orders, guilds, the knightly class, and personal feudal ties.	Secular power was organized in complex, shifting feudal and dynastic matrices, while the Church and its religious orders enjoyed substantial freedom and privileges.
Printing	National, transient in scope, and “the consumer is king” in the marketplace of ideas yet cannot talk back, moderate centralization because of the fixed costs of a printing press.	Loyalties gradually become concentrated in notionally homogeneous nation-states.	Dynasts come to seem archaic, and fascist, communist, and democratic nation-states based on egalitarian citizenship take over.
Internet	A <i>lingua franca</i> (English) increasingly ties together a global educated class, and the profit motive recedes as institutional and volunteer voices predominate.	At once globalized and niche-filled. People can bond easily with like-minded people worldwide, but need not know their neighbors.	Global governance institutions and NGOs gain influence, while national democracy becomes increasingly problematic.

If the printing press was the ultimate cause of modern nationalism, the transition was remarkably slow. Almost four centuries passed between Gutenberg’s printing press and the political consolidation of the German and Italian nations. Ideas of sovereignty are stubborn features of the mental landscape, and like the Roman Empire, it was the fate of the dynastic principle to be destroyed, then revived, and then to linger on as a dream and a fiction long after it had ceased to be a fact. First in England, then in France, revolutionaries executed a king, only to see a restoration, followed by another, more moderate revolution that set up another, more moderate king. England’s kings had almost ceased ruling by the middle of the 18th century, yet the British crown was never more popular than when it sat on the head of the largely powerless Queen Victoria. The principle that the people ought to rule seemed obvious to Locke in 1689, and to many others in the generations that followed, but the difficulty of implementing it

played into the hands of the old dynasts again and again, most notably in 1848. Hobbes and Burke, fearing revolution, strained to supply new justifications for the old monarchical order. Yet in hindsight, we can hardly regard the fall of the dynasts and the advent of national democracy throughout Europe as historical accidents. An aspiration that had persisted for centuries could hardly have remained indefinitely unfulfilled.

The aspiration to national democracy was not an inevitable and permanent feature of human nature. It was, instead, a product of history, and more specifically, a consequence of how the human conversation was organized by the printing press. Today, the human conversation is being reorganized again by the internet. It stands to reason that (a), in due course, the imagined communities in which people situate themselves can be expected to adapt to the new opportunities for communication, and (b), that what shape these new communities will take, and how they will shape the political organization of a future humanity, must be as difficult to conceive now, as a world of democratic nation-states would be in 1550. It may be helpful to use the High Middle Ages as “a distant mirror,” to borrow the title of Tuchman (1979) as a potent description of how historical analogies help us understand the world. The parallel is suggested, first of all, by the resemblances between the medieval manuscripts and modern websites, with their low costs of distribution and storage relative to production, and their high transaction costs for payment, favoring international distribution of texts, *linguae francae*, the dominance of institutional, volunteer, and pro bono over for-profit text production, and the simultaneous globalization and nichification of the human conversation. Other resemblances follow from these.

The hypothesis that we are fated, in some respects, to relive the Middle Ages, is not a pessimistic hypothesis, even if it is partly inspired by the terrorism of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment had a bias against the Middle Ages, and it lingers on in the negative connotations which words like “medieval” and “feudal” usually carry. Beginning in the Romantic era, there has also been a tradition of admiring the Middle Ages. The works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien are set in quasi-medieval worlds, and countless quasi-medieval imaginary worlds are generated by the flourishing fantasy-fiction industry for the benefit of readers and gamers. The pro-medieval tradition of the Romantics, Lewis and Tolkien, is wiser than the anti-medieval bias of the Renaissance humanists and the Enlightenment philosophes. For all the bril-

liance of classical Greece and Rome, they never really had human rights, limited government, or freedom of conscience. Their religions were immoral and intellectually irresponsible to the point of absurdity, their philosophies were mixed up with magic and superstition, their economies were founded on slave labor, and the golden ages of Greek and Roman freedom were stained with incessant warfare. In the High Middle Ages, philosophy and arts flourished, universities appeared, legal traditions capable of protecting human rights were emerging, slavery was mitigated to serfdom, and even serfdom then began to give way to general freedom, parliamentary government was born, and science and technology began to accelerate. To say that we entering an age of “neo-medieval globalism” is to forecast a sweeping betterment of the human condition, marred by some religious violence.

Key parallels between the present and the Middle Ages are sketched in Table 2.

Table 3: How the internet age resembles the Middle Ages

Feature of today's world	Medieval analogy	Explanation
English	Latin	<i>Lingua franca</i> of the educated elite
The international community	The Church	The largest imagined community with which most people identify, containing all others
Economics	Theology	Reigning intellectual discipline that supplies a standard of right and a conception of the good life for humans
Liberalism	Catholicism	A broad ideology, generally accepted by leaders and populaces, dissent from which is feared and condemned
International human rights law	Canon law	Legal norms pretending to universality, whose development guides and constrains the positive law of particular states
"Nation-building"	Medieval kingship emerges with Church sponsorship	Where states are weak, state formation is catalyzed and supported by outside civilizing forces
Govt. power is limited by human rights, representative institutions, international law	Govt. power is limited by natural law, feudalism, canon law and the Church	Opposition to overly strong states is supported and legitimized by outside civilizing forces
The UN	The papacy	Conceived of as center of civilization and touchstone of legitimacy, though often ineffectual
NGOs and development agencies	Monastic orders	Purpose-driven, transnational voluntary organizations working in various ways for the prescribed standard of right

A low cost of distribution and storage of text, relative to its production, made it easy for the human conversation to cross frontiers, and people learned the *lingua franca* of the times to participate in it. This helped the medieval people to believe to be part of a universal Church, whose Latin liturgy was the same from Sicily to Scandinavia. Similarly, people today feel a stake in “the international community,” to which they are tied by webs of communication, especially if they happen to know English, as more and more people do. The shape of the human conversation helps explain the ascendancy of (broadly defined) liberalism, which, having conquered the minds and consciences of the West, fairly easily extends these conquests into lands that communicate intensively with the West, listen to its deliberations from the margins, and find themselves challenged by its values and principles. The shape of the human conversation may even explain why economics, like theology in medieval times, is so influential today. Economics, built on basic needs and observed choices as analyzed using deductive logic, is a form of reasoning largely independent of cultural assumptions, so it travels well. Medieval theology had a similar universality in the Catholic West.

Shared principles like liberalism and modes of thinking such as economics allow for a high degree of solidarity and mutual understanding among upstanding members of the international community. The flip side of this is that illiberal opinions and regimes face anathematization, rather like heretics in early medieval times. Vladimir Putin is the latest national leader to defy the liberal world order. It will be interesting to see if his end resembles that of those who preceded him in the role, Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic. Openly racist speech in the USA provokes fierce ostracism. Illiberal political parties in Europe, such as Marine Le Pen’s National Front in France, are treated as pariahs by mainstream parties. The range of tolerated opinion includes free-market economics and democratic socialism, libertinism and moderate social conservatism, Christianity, atheism, and all long-standing religious traditions, but not racial hatred, advocacy of terrorism, or sympathy with Nazi and fascist regimes.

The international community, like the medieval Church, encourages state formation in places where states are absent, and seeks to strengthen states that are too weak to maintain order and administer justice, through foreign aid and policy advice. As medieval churchmen once crowned kings, served as royal councilors, and raised armies from Episcopal lands for the king’s service, so weak states today can expect help from the IMF, World Bank, diverse development agencies,

NGOs, and private philanthropy. States, after all, are needed to protect human rights against private violence, but stronger states can expect resistance from the same agencies if they violate human rights. Sanctions, the non-violent but often potent weapon of the international community against wrongdoers when it is not prepared to use force, resemble the interdict, the cessation of ecclesiastical services ordered by the medieval papacy, which it used to exert pressure on various regimes, without going to war. Liberals today, like the medieval people, believe that government should be limited, though the mechanisms are different. Medieval kings were limited by the feudal social contract, the immunities of the Church, and notionally by natural law. Modern national leaders are limited by representative institutions, international law, and the obligation to respect human rights. The UN lies at the heart of the liberal world order, as the papacy once lay at the heart of the medieval Catholic West, and even if, as of 2015, the UN bore a greater resemblance to the impotent papacy of the 10th century than to the muscular papacy of the 13th, its widespread recognition as a touchstone of legitimacy is a mostly untapped resource that may one day be used to accelerate the transition to liberal globalism.

At present, this sort of neo-medieval globalism is still only a tentative scaffolding around the firm, if eroding, structures of national sovereignty, but trends over the past couple of decades point to the empowerment of globalist organizations, official and voluntary, trends probably accelerated by the internationalization of social networks. If the internet is going to transform the world order as the printing press once did, we should not expect it to do so quickly. First, the conversation of mankind will be restructured. That is happening today. Over time, the structures of the imagined communities that people feel they belong to will change to become more like the structure of the human conversation itself. Nation-state sovereignty will remain a fixture of people's minds long after the rationales for it have lost their persuasiveness. People will fall back on it again and again as an expedient, when dreams of a more just and rational order elude implementation. Those new dreams are already being born, and are beginning to be actors in history. Some of them were born in the crucible of the anti-globalization movement.

The Rise and Fall of Anti-Globalization

A great irony of recent history is that the movement which probably most typifies and foreshadows the dawning age of globalist politics rallied under the slogan

of “anti-globalization.” Rising to international prominence through huge, angry protests against leading institutions associated with global capitalism, such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO, it appeared to be a growing force, a permanent challenger to the international economic power, as the international revolutionary socialist movement was in the 19th century. Some apologists for global capitalism, such as Harold James (2002), wrote with the urgency of men with their backs against the wall, but the movement dwindled as rapidly and unexpectedly as it had begun, and even the financial crisis that began in 2008 did not revive it. It was not suppressed; rather, ideological evolutions made it unfashionable.

The largest anti-globalization protests, involving tens or hundreds of thousands, occurred in November 1999 in Seattle, against the WTO; in April 2000, in Washington, against the IMF and World Bank; and in July 2001, in Genoa, Italy, against the G-8. Most protesters were non-violent, but not all. Meetings were canceled, police retaliated with pepper spray, tear gas, and stun grenades. One motive for scheduling the WTO meetings in November 2001, which launched a new round of trade talks, in Doha, Qatar, seems to have been that Doha was far away from the Western democracies where most protesters came from, and was, moreover, an authoritarian kingdom with few scruples about suppressing protests. The West seemed unsure of being able to guarantee the physical safety, in its own cities, of official summits associated with global capitalism, and had to outsource the WTO summit to a petro-state on the Persian Gulf.

Then something changed. The Annual Meetings of the IMF and World Bank in September 2002 attracted protests, but far smaller than those in Seattle and Genoa. One or two thousand protesters showed up, of which hundreds were temporarily arrested. Since then, the IMF, World Bank, WTO, G-8, and other multilateral organizations and clubs have been able to meet with only token protests. Why? Why did so many people take to the streets to protest against globalization in the first place? Given that they did, why did they stop? If the anti-globalization cause could mobilize hundreds of thousands in protest in 2001, why not in 2006, or 2011?

Protesters’ stated motives were bewilderingly varied. Some were protesting on behalf of the environment, trying to protect nature from the depredations of global corporations. Some were protesting against the outsourcing of jobs from developed nations to developing countries where wages and working conditions were poor. Some were protesting the loss of democratic national sovereignty to

opaque technocratic global institutions. The key catalyst of the Seattle protests, however, seems to have been the founding of the WTO in 1995, with new powers to interfere in the policies of developed Western democracies. In 1997, the WTO ruled against EU restrictions on imports of beef from cattle treated with hormones. In 1999, the WTO ruled against the EU's policy of favoring banana imports from certain ex-colonial countries. This pattern of interference threatened US domestic groups such as environmentalists and trade unions who were accustomed to using domestic policies to regulate working conditions and protect the environment. They were troubled to see a global institution, operating outside the ordinary channels of democratic accountability, imposing *laissez-faire* rules. Environmentalists and labor unions were the key constituencies of the Seattle protests.

One of the slogans in Seattle was "No Globalization without Representation," and this slogan probably comes closest to expressing what the movement was about and what gave its disparate members their transient unity. It also highlights the ambivalence that was present in it from the beginning. If one protests against "globalization without representation," there are, logically, two ways to address the grievance: (a) no globalization, and (b) globalization with representation. Which did the protesters want?

Inasmuch as they were protesting that increasing power was being wielded by institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO, which had only tenuous constitutional links to any democratic process and were effectively insulated from any kind of electoral pressures, the protestors had a point. It was anomalous, in an age when democracy reigned without a rival on the ideological plane, even if far fewer regimes were really democratic than claimed to be, that major institutions of global governance wielded power without democratic accountability. What was to be done about it? It was not clear how the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, much less the impersonal market forces of global finance or global supply chain management, could be made more democratically accountable. The anti-globalization movement was becoming a magnet for a political left orphaned by the fall of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of Marxist communism. It did not want less governance of markets, or a purer form of *laissez-faire* capitalism. What did it want?

The economist Dani Rodrik, at Harvard University, was the most respectable critic of globalization. In books like *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* (Rodrik,

1998) and *The Globalization Paradox* (Rodrik, 2011). He stresses the importance of various roles that the government plays in the economy, from antitrust to consumer safety to labor rights to environmental protection to social insurance, and the value of having these roles played by large, democratically accountable governments. A globalizing economy without robust global governance, Rodrik argued and still argues today, would be too volatile, and deficient in public goods and social insurance. Rodrik doubted that robust governance of a globalized economy would be possible for reasons that can perhaps be best expressed in Benedict Anderson's language. People's imagined communities were still national, so to organize some sort of democratic world polity was not a feasible project. To oversimplify, Rodrik truncated the slogan "no globalization without representation" to "no globalization." More accurately, he wanted to see globalization curtailed, and more power be wielded by the representative institutions that were already in place, namely, democratic national governments.

Rodrik was never quite a thought-leader for the anti-globalization movement, probably because there was never widespread sympathy within the movement for Rodrik's brand of nationalism. Most activists did not want to truncate the Seattle slogan, but preferred to foster vague dreams of a globalization with representation, a globalization that would somehow give the global proletariat more of a voice. Some of the Seattle protesters, to be sure, were old-style protectionists, resenting the threat to US sovereignty posed by the WTO. As the movement expanded, it soon claimed to speak for the oppressed masses of the developing world, and to make this claim credible, it needed exotic allies. As the left took over the movement, they imbued it with their traditional internationalism. That made the "anti-globalization" label awkward, and some participants adopted the label "alter-globalization" as an alternative, signaling that they wanted global cooperation, but not on "neoliberal" lines. An economist like Rodrik, calling for a return to the Bretton Woods system of the immediate post-Cold War decades, when trade and capital flows were more tightly controlled and national governments had more freedom to pursue national development plans, was not the ideologist the movement needed.

All manner of grievances against global capitalism were brought under the umbrella of the anti-globalization movement. In part, the anti-globalization movement was a generous reaction to global inequality, which seemed to be at a historic peak. Global inequality was not new, but the West's triumphalism in

the wake of its victory in the Cold War made it more galling. The title of Francis Fukuyama's bestseller, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (Fukuyama, 2006) captured the mood of the West, even if it was widely dismissed as hyperbole. By that title, Fukuyama meant that history in the sense of ideological struggle was over, and liberal democratic capitalism was established as a universal pattern for human societies, even if some societies had not yet caught up with the end of history. Such eulogies to the neoliberal world order made the need for a critique more urgent. How could a world of liberal, democratic, capitalist nation-states be accepted as "the end of history" when so many people worldwide were so desperately poor?

To this, the neoliberal answer was that as societies remodeled themselves on neoliberal lines, they would gradually "converge" to the freedom and prosperity enjoyed by the West. They would accumulate physical and human capital, adopt cutting-edge technology, and see labor productivity increase. The IMF, the World Bank, and the foreign aid agencies of the Western democracies would help them to adopt sound fiscal and monetary policies and improve public services and the rule of law. The WTO would pressure them to get rid of harmful protectionist rules that catered to local vested interests, while securing them access to the large, lucrative consumer markets of the West. Yet in the late 1990s, the facts seemed to contradict this optimistic story. The 1980s had been a "lost decade" for Africa and Latin America. Economic growth had been slow in South Asia for decades. And even the one region that had seemed to be converging to Western living standards, East Asia, suffered a devastating financial crisis in 1997-98, which then spread to Russia and Brazil. The writings of wandering polymath journalist Robert Kaplan, such as *The Ends of the Earth* (1996), vividly documented extreme global inequality in a way that would hardly have been possible before the openness of the 1990s, which increased freedom of travel for writers and journalists. Western Europe was rich, but suffered from high unemployment and slow growth. The USA was thriving, but for the rest of the world, global capitalism looked like a bad deal. It did not follow, however, that its critics had a viable alternative to offer.

The diversity of the anti-globalization movement was its strength and its weakness. It gave it an appearance of power and popular support, and at the same time made ideological coherence elusive. Some intellectuals sympathetic to the movement wrote books at the time that seemed like efforts to express articulate a unifying ideology for the diverse and chaotic anti-globalization movement. Thus,

Naomi Klein's book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, (Klein, 1999) published shortly after the battle in Seattle, represented multinational corporations as simultaneous oppressors of First World consumers, compelled by fashion trends to overpay for cool brands, and of Third World workers, paid starvation wages for toiling in sweatshops. This story made little sense economically, since sweatshop jobs must make Third World workers better off than the alternatives, or they wouldn't take them, and outsourcing jobs to poor countries lowered the prices of manufactured goods for Western consumers, rather than raising them. Other anti-globalization tracts for the times, such as *William Greider's One World, Ready or Not* (Greider, 1998) were similarly fraught with fallacies.

Had the anti-globalization movement endured, it might have found its Karl Marx in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and its *Das Kapital* in their 2000 book *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2009). Hardt and Negri make a determined effort to discern the constitution of the world order, which they call the "Empire," since the distant mirror they use to see the contemporary world by is the ancient Roman Empire. This metaphor overstates the political unity of the contemporary world, which is why the High Middle Ages, when the universal Church had great moral and political influence, but kings and feudal lords held most of the political power, supplies a better historical analogy. There is nonetheless a certain lucidity in Hardt and Negri's vision of "Empire" as a system at once of juridical power and of capitalist exploitation, of which the UN and international law, humanitarian interventions, and transnational corporations are equal expressions. It is productive not only of vast wealth, but also of notions of justice and right, tendentiously designed to serve the interests of capital.

Like Karl Marx, the supreme opponent of capitalism, who however insisted that capitalism was to be preferred to the feudal past because it brought socialist liberation closer, Hardt and Negri refuse to entertain nostalgia for the nation-state. Instead, they see in the rising global Empire a new stage on which the internationalist ambitions of the left can be played out. In spite of the wealth, power, and apparent strength of the Empire, they see corruption, decadence, and decline as inherent in it from the inception. They look beyond that decline and fall to a vaguely described epoch in which "the multitude"—the laboring proletarian mass of global mankind—will attain new modes of freedom and self-government, rather as Christianity brought a new kind of freedom to the declining Roman Empire. They end with a eulogy to the "militant," a kind of revolutionary community

organizer who, they prophesy, will rise up and overthrow global capitalism. What will replace it is not clear, but it is certainly not the national democratic capitalism advocated by Rodrik. It seems, rather, to be some sort of “globalization with representation.”

However, the crescendo of protest from Seattle to Genoa was followed by a swift and sudden fade-out. Why? The 9/11 attacks provoked a reaction of patriotic solidarity which briefly made revolutionary protest distasteful. Then the war in Iraq provided a new focal point for the ire of the political left. Meanwhile, there was a strong intellectual counter-attack by advocates of globalization. Jagdish Bhagwati’s *In Defense of Globalization* (Bhagwati, 2004) and Martin Wolf’s *Why Globalization Works* (Wolf, 2004) among many others, made an erudite and often passionate case, based on economic theory and history, that the anti-globalization movement’s means were the worst possible way to achieve its ostensible end of helping the world’s poor. Globalization had lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty in East Asia, and it would do the same elsewhere, if only it were fully embraced and given time. More importantly, the facts began to support this optimistic story. By the mid-2000s, the world economy was booming, and world poverty was being alleviated as never before. East Asia’s financial crisis proved transient, and strong growth resumed. China’s booming growth not only spread decent living standards to more of its own people, but buoyed global commodity prices, helping countries in resource-exporting regions like Latin America and Africa to flourish, as well. Before 2008, growth was robust in every developing region of the world, and no one seems to have blamed the financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath on globalization.

If capitalist prosperity and the Bush administration explained the decline of the anti-globalization movement, it should have revived with Bush’s exit from office, and especially, with the 2008 financial crisis. In fact, there was an outbreak of protest in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Anti-austerity protests in Europe helped to ignite the Occupy Wall Street movement, which broke out in Zuccotti Park in New York City on November 15, 2011, with the slogan “We are the 99%.” Naomi Klein (2011) called Occupy Wall Street “the most important thing in the world now,” while Hardt and Negri (2011) hailed “the fight for ‘real democracy’ at the heart of Occupy Wall Street.” But the Occupy movement did not target the IMF, World Bank, or WTO, but banks and rich people. Many of the same people

and organizations that agitated against global capitalism in 1999-2002 are still agitating against it, but their target now is just capitalism, not globalization.

If the anti-globalization cause has become unfashionable, globalization and the institutions that represent it have gained, as it were by forfeit, a certain legitimacy. They enjoy a habitual deference from the media, and strikingly, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, managing director of the IMF, was the leading Socialist candidate for French president before he was discredited by a sex scandal in 2011. More important is the globalization of civil society of which the anti-globalization movement was both a symptom and a catalyst. A vast proliferation of “non-governmental organizations,” or NGOs, now engage in operational development work as well as advocacy, are often recognized as “stakeholders” by the World Bank and other development agencies. Watkins et al. (2012) summarize a scholarly literature that views NGOs as “an alternative form of social organization . . . more altruistic, more cooperative, and less hierarchical than governments and for-profit organizations” which “by their very presence . . . assert an imagined shared citizenship in an emerging global polity.” They represent a makeshift solution to the problem of “globalization without representation,” more voluntary and decentralized than formal democracy. As Hardt and Negri (2000) observed at one point, they are to the contemporary world order what the monastic orders were for the civilization of the High Middle Ages. NGOs and development agencies, like medieval monastic orders, each have their own style, structure, and goals, but these are generally consistent with liberal principles and desiderata, e.g., *Doctors without Borders* promotes health, and *Reporters without Borders*, press freedom. They are not the paid pawns of global capitalism, but are usually run with donor funds and the time donations of underpaid staff, and motivated by spontaneous sympathy with liberal ideals.

Conclusion

At the time of writing (October 2015), the democratic politics of the contemporary West exhibit a certain aura of crisis and dysfunction. Far-right parties in Europe and populist candidates in the US mock the political establishment and cast doubt over whether the center can hold. Europe has at least the excuse of economic crisis, but the US is experiencing political turmoil (e.g., Donald Trump leads the polls for the Republican presidential nomination) despite a relatively healthy economy. If the thesis advanced here has any truth in it, the deep cause of

this dysfunction may be the reorganization of the human community by the internet, making the democratic nation-state less well-adapted to serve human needs. The legitimacy that is bleeding away from nation-states is flowing to global governance institutions and NGOs which, though not democratically accountable by any regular mechanism yet have weak claims to represent the human community as a whole, national governments lack altogether.

If nation-states do find themselves ever more penetrated and constrained by NGOs, international human rights law, trade treaties, and so forth, human liberty will probably be well served. Democracy is far from a guarantee against the abuse of power, and representation is separable from majoritarian math. Often, unelected NGOs stand bravely for universal principles, while legislators are captured by vested interests, or pander to voter ignorance. Neo-medieval globalism can supply new checks and balances on national governments, and open up new spaces and chances for human beings to flourish. Some of the vague but alluring visions formed in the excitement of the anti-globalization movement may, after a fashion, be realized.

In today's world order, no one is really tasked with representing the common interests of mankind. This is a gap the anti-globalization movement briefly tried to fill. The "invisible hand" of the market may direct the profit-seeking efforts of corporations in the service of the common good to some extent. As Rodrik stresses, the market must operate in a framework of institutions which it cannot provide for itself, and in any case there are well-understood "market failures." Global capitalism without global governance is problematic. The tension between globalization and democracy should not be resolved at the expense of globalization, however, since globalization is a mighty force for good. Nor does a democratic world polity seem either likely to emerge, or desirable. We should look instead for a humane global civil society to emerge in a more decentralized and voluntarist way, based partly in social media, and to engage in a sustained, benign contest for the moral high ground with the old sovereign nation-states, in a quest for some form of globalization with representation.

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