Dystopia and Civilizations: Comparison of Social Movements in the Network Society

Adán Stevens-Díaz

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr
Throughout the some six thousand years of human history, which is in itself a tiny fraction of the two-hundred thousand years of human existence, periodically an invention comes along that fundamentally changes a human society, and then serves as a catalyst by which world civilization is altered. Throughout this process, power bases shift, cultures adapt, everything -- from labor to housing, family to politics -- is revolutionized. I share the belief that today we live in such a transition period, and the challenge to the study of civilization is how best to understand the new shape of these forces.

The informational age, like the mercantilist and capitalist ages that have preceded it, have been shaped by new technological advances. With astonishing rapidity, the media and internet have changed the power dynamics in the acquisition of knowledge. Unlike similar movements of earlier epochs, these movements today utilize cyberspace to appeal to a global public. In so doing, they bypass bureaucracies and state systems, challenging the power of nation-states to control regions and territories. The focus of this article is to explore the ways in which informational technologies give birth to social movements.

I have chosen to examine two movements that are as radically different as they are important in this new century: the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN), or the Zapatistas, and Al-Qaeda. In describing these two movements at different ends of the spectrum, I will offer an analysis that applies to other movements that lie ideologically between them. They can be linked by the concept of "Network Society" as described by Manuel Castells. Both movements use modern media networks to turn international public opinion to their side. At the heart of the matter is a common use by both groups of cyberspace and the ability to challenge the nation-state's control over the political system.

While the genesis, setting and goals of Al Qaeda are different from those of the Zapatistas, they have used networks in a similar fashion to create a global Islamic awareness. The mobilization of Muslims through the transnational message of Al-Qaeda has echoed the support
within the Islamic world for the Palestinian cause. Al-Qaeda however, has transformed the cause from a nationalist one centered on the Palestinian struggle, into an Islamist one that calls for Muslims to resist the West. Rather than limit change to the reform or establishment of a nation-state where Muslim interests are protected, the vision of a future for Islam requires a rejection of Western ideas of state political systems and linkages to capitalist advantages in the global economic order. While the Zapatistas focus upon the Mexican government in appealing for indigenist rights, Al-Qaeda’s strategy is to attack the bastions of Western power.

Both movements oppose modernization, understood as a neo-liberal interpretation of globalization. In one sense, the concept of “globalization” is virtually synonymous with “civilization.” The phenomenon of identifying imperial interests with civilization is not new. The examples from the ancient world of Hellenist and Roman civilization are clearer than more subtle forms of the same with concepts like “white man’s burden” and “Wilsonian democracy.” Francis Fukuyama sums up many of these past trends and applies them to contemporary globalization, when he writes:

This process [modernization] guarantees an increasing homogenisation of all human societies, regardless of their historical origins or cultural inheritances. All countries undergoing economic modernisation must increasingly resemble one another: they must unify nationally on the basis of a centralised state, urbanise, replace traditional forms of social organisation like tribe, sect, and family with economically rational ones based on function and efficiency, and provide for the universal education of their citizens. Such societies have become increasingly linked with one another through global markets and the spread of a universal consumer culture. Moreover, the logic of modern natural science would seem to dictate a universal evolution in the direction of capitalism.

This is a vision of what Fukuyama has called “the end of history,” claiming that Western style liberalism and capitalism are extended throughout the world. He projects globalization as a benefit to all it touches, a premise opposed by Al-Qaeda and the Zapatistas. Both of these movements object to the ways that this imposed form of civilization levels cultural and social differences. Defense of the traditional religion becomes necessary in the face of the imposition of secularism. Moreover, the continuing dependency and exploitation of the Third World built into Neo-Liberal Capitalism makes the modernization elab-
While they are focused on distinctly local issues, both movements share this central opposition to globalization. Criticism of unreachable modernization and an appeal to religion are imperative for movements that seek to galvanize the public, including not only the two under study here, but also ecological and anti-globalization groups in other parts of the world. Precisely because the social goals and use of violence and terrorism are so different for the Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda, their adaptation to the network society underscores how the technology of cyberspace is affecting all kinds of social movements today. Moreover, the resistance can be as global as the imperialism. Hence, one might easily conclude both the imposition and the resistance are two different but related forms of civilization.

A crucial part of this paper is the application of the concept of “dystopia” to both movements. Because dystopia is the opposite of utopia, an understanding of how this concept applies to movements today requires a brief analysis of the pioneering work of Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*. Mannheim writes that when we “call every actually existing and ongoing social order, a ‘topia,’ then these wish-images which take on a revolutionary function will become utopias.” Mannheim presumes that people will want such “topias” (from the Greek word for ‘place’) when they are good, i.e. when they are “utopias.” Dystopia, however, can be described as “an imaginary society whose evil qualities are meant to serve as a moral or political warning.” George Orwell’s 1984, published in 1949 and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) are examples of novels about dystopias. Late nineteenth century American literature witnessed the emergence of novels using dystopia as a theme for social commentary. Dystopia here is the same as what John Stuart Mill called “a perverted utopia.”

Today, we are presented with a world in which claims for a utopian society require the systematic suppression of human impulses towards “traditional forms of social organisation like tribe, sect, and family,” as cited above from Fukuyama. The Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda utilize religious concepts that are related to Mannheim’s examples of utopia within social movements. The French Revolution substituted a “religion of reason” for Christianity, but although it was atheist, it may be analyzed as a variation of the same type of religiously envisioned utopia. Mannheim is not dismissive of these utopian movements. In describing their characteristics, he underscores the historical effects.
Citing Lamartine that “Utopias are often only premature truths,”14 Mannheim shows how hopes for social change are not understood as unreachable by their proponents. While he notes that movements proposing utopias have failed historically to achieve the perfect society, he attributes that failure to the temporal circumstances. He says: “Because the concrete determination of what is utopian proceeds always from a certain stage of existence, it is possible that the utopias of today may become the realities of tomorrow”.15 Utopias, for Mannheim, are necessarily revolutionary as expressions of human consciousness, but not as plans of action. I would add that they also fit into most conceptions of civilization.

The Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda movements have avoided the embrace of ideology. They are not Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Communist, Liberal Reformist, Conservative (whether laissez-faire or Neo-Con), or anything like these ideologies as commonly understood.16 All such concepts are categorized by the two movements as alien imports from capitalism and the “West.” They oppose, reject and even ridicule such postures in virtually all their literature. They do not consider their goals to be reducible to “practical” achievements within a standard form of ideology.

The Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda do not reject the internet, computers and the like. In fact, they could have had no success without such modern technologies. However, they want to remove the Western control over modernization and the historical intrusion into the affairs of their nations. They both argue that the people (Mayans for the Zapatistas, Muslims for Al-Qaeda) had already achieved progressive and prosperous civilizations in the past when they were invaded by both military and cultural warfare. The goal is not to create a new Mayan or Muslim utopia like those of the past, but to remove a false Western one that blocks self-determination. They urge removal of Western control because this will allow their societies to return to native potential for authentic forms of modernization and progress.

The authenticity each movement proposes consists of freedom to develop social forms that correspond with the people’s best interests. The present situation is a dystopia because it does not reflect this internal freedom of self-determination. The target, I think, is a Western imposition of a neo-liberal utopia. The agenda of Neo-Liberalism is articulated, not only by academics like Fukuyama, and implemented by post-Cold War policies of the IMF, the World Bank and transnational corporations. The Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda want to empower the local
forces to preserve their traditional identities during any process of
development. For Al-Qaeda, consider the rejection of Western democ-

cracy as an innovation against the Qu'ran. The Zapatistas have cre-

ated a fictional ancestor, Votan Zapata, as a kind of Everyman to link the
Mayan history and the Mexican Revolution as pre-Western moments of
Chiapan freedom.

It is in this sense that I use “dystopia” to focus an analysis of these
resistance movements. They both want to end the false utopia created
by globalization that adheres to the neoliberal model. I have not found
in their official releases or pronouncements a clear promise that the
removal of the false utopia in and of itself will create a perfect society.
The tenor of the call to arms, however, emphasizes that it will be impos-
sible to build a better society until first the imposed utopia and ideolo-
gy are removed. In this way, dystopia avoids the failing of religious
utopia in promising the unrealizable and also the betrayal of the people
by ideologies such as Communism, nationalism and the like, which can
fulfill promises for a nation-state only partially.

Despite overtones of religion in both movements, I believe that nei-
ther one proposes to install a religious utopia. The movements look at
the Mayan people or Muslims through the prism of past glories of civi-
lization history. The practice of the native religion in those times
demonstrates they once controlled their own destiny and practiced a
religion that enshrined their own needs. The return to a more religious
society serves the Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda as a metaphor for self-deter-
mination. The problems for both communities, as they picture them,
has arisen from the imposition by outside forces of a new religious
regime (or more accurately, of a secularizing one) that benefits politics
and state power.

For Al-Qaeda, the solution is to restore the Qu'ran as the central
force shaping social and political relations. Once the nation-states are
subordinated to the teachings of Islam as intended by Mohammed and
exemplified in the rightly-minded caliphs, a proper balance will be
restored. The Islam revered by Al-Qaeda is a militant one. Al-Qaeda
looks to the Muslim resistance and victories over the Western Crusaders
in the 11th and 12th centuries as the golden moment of history. Return to
those principles – which is not the same as return to those times – is the
chief goal of the movement. The vision of Emiliano Zapata (1879-
1919) at the time of the Mexican Revolution utilizes the Mayan classi-
cal period in similar ways. Both movements create their own glori-

ous histories and sidestep the failures of nation-state experiences. This
is their way to updating religious traditions to a contemporary context where modern technology can be adapted to serve the people’s needs.

This last point requires some analysis because the connection between religion, especially the religious past, and dystopia is a complicated one. The concept of “invented traditions” is useful here. As Hobsbawm and Ranger write: “All invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion.” These traditions are called “invented,” because they relate and recall past events selectively. They do not “lie” or falsify the past, but by suppressing what is unpleasant or compromising and emphasizing what presages contemporary movements, they create a new function for the memory of a nation’s or group’s history.

I believe that these same qualities are employed with the invented religious traditions used by the Zapatistas about the past Mayan civilization and by Al-Qaeda about the glorious age of Islamic civilization. Their use of history is not a scholarly search for the facts but an emotional creation of reasons for pride and communal action. In this sense, they do not promote a religious utopia as much as they use an “invented” religious tradition to discredit the actual dystopia.

Today’s radical movements attempt to replace an existence that has mastered technology but has not relieved suffering. In its place, they advocate humane controls derived from traditional values. However, they do not set out programmatically what the restoration will bring: it is enough for them to end the current misery. The removal of the false values serves the same function as the utopian or ideological wish-images of previous movements that did describe the changes they would bring. Consider for instance, the message from the Zapatistas to a 1997 demonstration in Italy against racism and the Northern League: “...this ocean no longer separates us or makes us different. Because lack of freedom makes us the same. Because we no longer want this kind of world...Because we no longer want falsehood treated as a virtue. Because we no longer want others to impose their forms of being and thinking on us.”

The analysis of each of these movements needs to develop three elements: first, that they utilize the network society as described by Castells; second, that dystopia caused by Western impositions and globalization explains the content of their appeal; and third, that this dystopia is complemented by invocation of a past civilization.
The Zapatistas

From the archeological record, the Zapatista have created a history for Chiapas that views it as a land of noble people made victims by invaders. In their ideologically charged version of history, Aztec oppression of the Mayans was continued by the Spaniards. The fictional Mayan Everyman, Votan Zapata, suffers from both Aztecs and Spaniards. As has happened with other civilizations, the Aztecs (barbarians) relied on a superior war technology to subdue a Mayan civilization that was more scientifically and culturally advanced. By the time the Spanish *conquistadores* arrived in the 16th century, the Aztecs had appropriated technologies of the Mayans, reducing their cities to tributaries within the Aztec Empire centered in present day Mexico City.

While it could be argued that Spanish colonialism did improve life in the colony they called New Spain from the entry of Cortés in 1521 until independence in 1810, this was not the case in Chiapas. Because the *conquistadors* were seeking riches to take back to the motherland, lack of minerals in Chiapas meant that the Mayans there would be left alone. The Catholic missionaries were the most interested in the region in colonial times, with evangelization as the principle effect. Conversion to Catholicism, however, did not displace key elements of the existing culture. For example, the missionaries allowed the Mayan language to persist by translating the catechisms into the native language. In fact, the great Spanish defender of the natives, Bartolome de las Casas, was the bishop of the region in the 16th century.

Revolt against Spain at the dawn of the 19th century brought a new Mexican nation-state into being, although there was no major participation from Chiapas in 1810. One might compare the natives of Chiapas with the slaves in American Revolution, since no matter which side the slaves/natives favored, they remained marginalized. The revolving door of dictators and juntas in Mexico City after 1810 did little to change Chiapas. For a century, it remained scarcely different than it was under Spanish colonial power: agrarian lands and a feudal economic structure, which concentrated power and wealth in the hands of a small, landed elite. They, and not the Mayans of Chiapas, controlled the emergent technologies of railroads, public education and republican concepts of law. Thus, the Zapatistas do not identify their history with the history of Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 burst like a thunder-clap on the regime of Porfirio Diaz. However, the Mexican Revolution of 1910 was
Adán Stevens-Díaz 79

composed of many factions. The famous Plan of Ayala was a mixture of peasant desires for land and intellectuals hope for a new nation state built upon their radical ideologies. Analyzing the complexity of the 1910 revolution, Eric Wolf focuses attention on Emiliano Zapata as a central figure — in fact, one who functions very much like a Ladino—who became one of the most effective leaders. Zapata is identified as the sponsor for Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution in 1917, stipulating the break-up of latifundia. Once the long expected land redistribution began, however, the peasants threw down their arms, opening the door, says Wolf, for the revolution to be “stolen”.27

While the 1910 Mexican Revolution was filled with contradictions, the Zapatistas today consider that the most important benefit to the people of Chiapas came in Article 27 of 1917 Constitution. This provision redistributed communal lands, annulling confiscation made by former landowners. What had been owned by the people in the semi-feudal colonial system was now turned back to social use. The guardian for the agrarian economy, however, was the single party in the new Mexican state. The PRI espoused protection of native Indian peoples, borrowing revolutionary rhetoric. Ironically, the attention to the natives ended by depriving them of native identity when attempting the creation of a new Mexican identity. These changes appealed mostly to Ladino elites, because it enhanced their power. They become avid supporters of PRI and in exchange were named to be the government officials in Chiapas. However, in Chiapas in the 20th century economy of Mexico, there was little attention by PRI government for schools, roads and other infrastructure.28

In a analogy with the role of the church of Las Casas in defending the native peoples from the Spaniards, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1964) produced the efforts of Bishop Samuel Ruiz who propelled the Catholic Church into an active role for betterment of the people’s condition from the secular PRI Mexican government. Citing a “Preferential option for the poor,”30 the church broke away from the old status quo and called for a new way for government to address societal needs. The church’s pronouncements fell heavily upon the PRI, which historically had offered patronage to the Ladinos. Furthermore, it should be noted that while traditionally violence has been viewed as antithetical to the Christian message, a just war theory, based on the notion that armed struggle is justifiable in self-defense, was cited as an acceptable last resort.31 In the case of Chiapas, the weakness of the PRI under the corrupt President Zedillo was confronted with the just war
option from Theology of Liberation, resulting in a movement that offered armed resistance as a religious alternative to suffering oppression.

On the secular front, the Zapatistas today claim that North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an extension of over 500 years of oppression by Western civilization. On January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA was signed, the Zapatistas launched their movement. One of the chief causes of the rebellion was a clause in NAFTA, which resulted in the dissolution of Article 27 in the Mexican Constitution. With Article 27 disbanded, these commonly-held lands would now be sold to the highest bidder. After centuries of hardships, the people of Chiapas finally declared “Ya Basta!” (meaning, "Enough already!").

The standard Issues in 1992 were virtually the same since the colonial period and the 1910 Revolution under Zapata: land reform, opposition to government control of local culture and an economy run by policies favoring foreigners. The Zapatistas asserted that the PRI had betrayed ideals of Zapata for land reform. The solution offered is to replace the nation state, where emphasis is placed on the maintenance of the status quo and bureaucracies. In its place, the Zapatistas urge a “people” state where equality for all and respect for each group would be the main concern. Ironically, while the Zapatistas objected to changing Article 27 in the constitution, they did support the simultaneous revision of Article 4 on the Mexican Constitution. The new amendment had made it clear that the guarantee of equality in the original Article 4 would now specify that such equality embraced the maintenance of indigenous cultures. No longer would Article 4 be used as a basis for assimilation of individuals to a single national culture.

The Zapatistas avoided direct engagement with the Mexican army. They retreated from the military to prevent being crushed by a superior force. At the same time, they appealed to world opinion in defense of indigenous rights. This coincided with the 1992 Quincentennial that awakened native people’s protest against the results of Columbus’ journey. Most importantly, they discovered how to use of media to appeal to world opinion.

Beinin and Stock identify three types of media: first, the corporate media, e.g. newspapers, TV, radio, etc.; second, the independent media, which produces documentaries, books, etc.; and third, the network media. The network media is a combination of corporate independent and personal use that equalizes all access to cyberspace. Cleaver details how cyberspace and the internet quickly became the forum for Zapatista
support, refuting government distortions and carrying the original message with all of its militancy, “not days later but hours or even minutes after an original story or argument.” Much like the bloggers in the United States, the cyberspace supporters of the Zapatistas discredited the official and corporate internet almost as soon as the effort was made to downplay or misrepresent the movement. Even the effort by the PRI to co-opt the movement by allowing a march in Mexico City could not restore the party’s image of invincibility at the polls or the notion promoted by the then President Zedillo that globalization is inevitable.

The efforts of the Zapatistas helped spell the end of PRI dominance and the election of Vicente Fox. The new president tried but failed to identify his party, Partido de Accion Nacional (PAN) with the Zapatista resistance to the PRI as the growing distrust of the PAN has shown recently as Mexico goes to the polls. The plan of the EZLN recently announced to refrain from supporting any Mexican political party and to critique them all underlines the three essential points of this paper: that they utilize the network society; that dystopia caused by Western impositions and globalization explains the content of their appeal; and that this dystopia is complemented by invocation of the past that is linked to religious convictions. Castells cites "local disorder" as a key ingredient in the Zapatista's effort, a notion that coincides with the role I have assigned dystopia.

Al-Qaeda

A historical outline of Islam demonstrates the close connections of this religion with Arab culture and nationality. Although it was written after the death of Muhammad, the Qur'an is scripture recited in Arabic, that unites the Arabic peoples not only religiously but also ethnically. Within a century of the Prophet’s preaching, the Muslims had conquered not only the lands where the Semitic peoples had once established empires but also had defeated many of the successor empires of non-Arabs. They established an Arab/Islamic empire, centered in Baghdad, but stretching from Spain to India.

Although the faith that rose from the Arabs was attacked by various ethnic groups including the hostile Mongols, the Muslim faith survived as a multi-ethnic religion. The creation of an Islamic nation-state capable of surviving into modern times, however, was not the achievement of Arabs but of the Ottomans who assumed hegemony over most Muslims in the fifteenth century and held it until the first decades of the twentieth. Nonetheless, there is a historical basis for a Muslim Golden
Age that coincides with the flowering of Islamic religion. There have been periodic efforts to restore religious supremacy throughout history. Often, but not always, such efforts have advocated a theocracy, much in the style of the utopias discussed by Mannheim. The Arabs have been particularly beset with difficulties in affirming a national or cultural identity that is not also a theocratic imposition of Islam. Tensions with nationalism and state interests produced the Ba'athists of the 1950s, who had some success in Egypt, Syria and Iraq in fashioning modern nations; however, the conflicting forces of nationhood, religion and modernity continue in flux.

Castells offers a definition of fundamentalism: “...the construction of collective identity under the identification of individual behavior and society’s institutions to the norms derived from God’s law, interpreted by a definite authority that intermediates both God and humanity.” But in a sense, fundamentalism is a Western and Christian term that does not fit Islam. It is true that all Muslims accept the word of the Qur’an as absolute, but there are traditions within Islam that allow for commentaries to interpret and find alternate meanings for the text. I prefer to view Islam with the terminology of Castells who notes that it might better be described as “multivocal shari’a” where different interpretations of the absolute Word of God are in constant competition.

One of the characteristics of the Zapatistas was the invention of tradition that allowed them to suggest that the glories of the Mayan Empire had been interrupted by outside forces: first came the Aztecs, then the Spaniards, the Mexican state, the lukewarm PRI and globalization under NAFTA. Without such impositions, the Zapatistas have suggested, the people of Chiapas would have achieved a more just and equitable society. For Islamists, the invocation of the past and a Muslim Golden Age follows along a similar path. However, unlike the Mayan religion that has been syncretized with Christianity, Islam remains a clearly defined and continually vital religion for the Arabs. If dystopia or condemnation of the actual state of affairs is to be effective, any such movement must also explain somehow the failure of Islam to guide Muslims today as in the Golden Age.

Beinin and Stork trace the emergence of modern Islamist movements beginning with Muhammed ‘Abduh (1848-1905) and the salafiyya movement. They conclude that “Islamists do not uncritically reject modernity; they are trying to reformulate it and regulate it, using the discursive terms of the Islamic heritage.” Armed with this theological argument, all that was necessary to unleash the reforming
power represented by the salafiyya concepts was a political application to a specific nation-state. This was defined in Egypt by Sayyid Qutb’s in his most influential writing: *Ma’alim fi al-tariq*. He claimed that Egypt was not a Muslim state, but “a regime of pre-Islamic ignorance (jahiliyya). Hence, it was legitimate to launch a jihad against such a regime.”

This religious interpretation of the need for revolt can be credited to Hasan al-Banna (1906-49) who founded the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jam'iyyat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) in Egypt, with branches in Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Sudan. Castells calls this mix of traditional law and accommodation to present circumstances evidence that Islamists are not traditional but “hypermodern.”

The organizing principles used by Islamists such as Osama bin Laden in the 1990s have roots in these earlier formulations of Salafism. The call for reform and acceptable behavior however, is not limited only to those who are Muslim. Reviewing the various calls from bin Laden, Castells describes the territory defended by Al-Qaeda: “It is the domain of God, not the space of the state.” This emphasizes the dystopian nature of the Al-Qaeda resistance, which is a “resistance identity, not a project identity” because “it does not propose a program for society, or for humanity…”

Castells discusses the social class origins of Al-Qaeda and notes that they come from a prosperous class. The EZLN has middle-class leadership even if they are focused on the indigenous poor. Castells notes that Al-Qaeda has a similar aspiration to organize the Arab poor around the globe. Moreover, the rise of opposition to Neo-Liberalism among Muslims follows a similar timeline with the dislocations from globalization in Mexico.

Following the debt crisis of the 1980s, the decline of the price of oil, and the IMF-imposed economic restructuring projects that limited state expenditures, the efficacy of states has tended to become restricted to urban middle-class areas. States are unable to provide previously established levels of services or to insure adequate supplies of commodities to all sectors of their territory and population. The political and moral vacuum thus created has been occupied by the Islamists, who have established a social base by offering services that the various states have failed to provide.

It is the case of Chechnya that perhaps presents the clearest example of how the influence of Al-Qaeda has transformed both traditional conservatism and Muslim nationalism. From Muslim nationalist opposition to Czarist Russia and then to a secular USSR, the struggle today
has become Islamist, and adopted the Muslim cause of Al-Qaeda. Chechen rebels imitated the attack on what they viewed as the oppressor state by taking hostages in a Moscow theatre on October 26, 2002. Subsequent attacks have been even more deadly. The leadership of the rebels has now fallen to Shamil Basayev, who is strongly identified with Al-Qaeda. Thus, a traditional conservatism, with ethnic, regional and religious nationalisms at its core has now become a radical conservatism allied in cyberspace with Islamists.

The resistance by Muslims as summoned by Al-Qaeda has significant differences from the Zapatista call to arms. Violence for the Zapatistas appeals to the just war theory, that is, their right to take up arms to defend themselves against violence, but as a matter of last resort. In Islam, use of violence in defense of the faith (jihad) does not need to be apologized for.

The Common Enemy: Globalization

Globalization can be understood in a very general sense to describe the diffusion world-wide of any single process, whether it is the sale of a commodity like Coke Cola or the adoption of a specific form of political organization, such as government by elected representatives of a party system. I have used this term to include any such process, whether the effect is cultural, political or economic. In fact, globalization has provoked the opposition of the Zapatistas and Al-Qaeda precisely because it seems to pervade every segment of civic and social life.

Dystopic movements should concern civilizationists. Immanuel Wallerstein places civilization within a world system that extends the benefits of material well-being equally to all. However, capitalism as it is experienced today throttles the liberation of the people and chokes their desire for equality for the sake of profits. Thus, the 21st century faces the contradiction of maintaining a world-system where some must win and others lose while simultaneously holding out the promise of eventual equality. The dilemma approaches Castells’ ‘unreachable modernity’ that generates dystopias in the colonized regions of the world. Although Wallerstein’s description of capitalism does not mean that he favors the social injustice that has resulted, I think Manuel Castells offers a clearer statement of the ways that the negative forces of globalization may be resisted. World systems may have been produced by the evolution of capitalism, says Castells, but today the free
flow of information through the internet and various forms of media, along with a higher world-wide literacy rate are independent of capitalism. The transformation of local society and linkages to world systems are better explained, says Castells, by a network society model. These resources can carry information that is not only independent of capitalism, but also can oppose its spread and influence.

As I have described, social and political movements like the EZLN and Al Qaeda differ from earlier radical opposition to capitalism because they do not need to offer a utopian vision to counter globalization. These two movements in the age of the network society do not depend upon projecting a utopian ideal, as could be said with earlier movements like the 18th century French Revolution, or the 20th century Russian, Cuban or Chinese Revolutions. Rather, network society movements focus upon protest against the effects of modernity and Westernization. Globalization has brought dystopia upon peripheral regions like Central Mexico and the Arab Middle East.

By creating successful opposition in specific cases and determined regions, the movements studied here undercut the claim to inevitability that reinforces policies that seek to impose globalization. Moreover, by suggesting that similar factors are at work in other regions of the world, I think I can advance consideration that analysis of such movements in the 21st century will depend on use of concepts like the network society and dystopia rather than the nation state and utopian goals. Fandy summarizes the impotency of modern nations to grasp the radical departure from standard political organizations when he observes the following:

And while Western governments may prevent the physical immigration of foreign peoples with foreign ideas, they also cannot prevent the cyberspace presence of foreign thought and opposition rhetoric. Geographic boundaries and notions of state sovereignty, traditionally definers of individual states, seem to dissolve in the cyberspace formed from an overriding globalization of local concepts and localization of global concepts.51

Modern technology, particularly the technology of cyberspace has changed the scope of civilization in ways unimaginable thirty years ago. Al Qaeda and the Zapatistas are among the first to utilize the technology of cyberspace to create a worldwide network for their movements. I do not think they will be the last.
ENDNOTES

1Wallerstein (2004a) pgs. 76-90, shows that technologies have constantly expanded the masses for economics and applies the same principle to politics. For more on the application to the present, see Cleaver.

2In May of 2005, representatives of several Arab countries met with Latin American peers in Brasilia in order to build common approaches to each sector’s basic problems. See New York Times’ report by Larry Rohter, “Little Common Ground at Arab-South American Summit Talks”, May 11, 2005. Reports in various media of Al-Jazeera for the same date are more positive.

3He has written three books on this topic, “The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture.” Much of my analysis derives from the second volume, The Power of Identity.

4See Cobban for a description of the Palestinian cause and differences from Islamist movements.

5Fukuyama, introduction.

6Castells, pg. 20.

7In my research I was able to trace the term to 1868 when the English philosopher, John Stuart Mill, coined it. I accept his definition which represents the opposite of Utopia, a term coined for social use by St. Thomas More.

8Mannheim, pg. 193.


10Battisti, 1983.

11I would also note that dystopia is not the same as nihilism. Nihilism is a denial of any need for order or authority. To explain the connection among these three concepts, I would compare it to the relationship of love, hate and apathy. Love and hate are
opposites; one is positive, the other negative, but both are forces. Apathy, on the other hand, is the absence of feeling. Similarly, utopia and dystopia are powerful forces for or against an existing order; nihilism, like apathy, lacks passion for any order at all.

13Mannheim, 1936, pg. 213
14Mannheim, 1936, pg. 203,
15Mannheim, 195-196.
16See Parfrey, pgs. 42-55; Murata and Chittick, pgs. 332-35.
17Beinin and Stork, pgs. 4-5, citing Al-Zawahiri.
18Ponce de Leon, pgs. 19-21, citing communication of April 10, 1994.
19Wolf, 30-35.
20Hobsbawm and Ranger, 13.
21Hobsbawm and Ranger, 9.
22Ponce de Leon, pgs. 185-86, citing message of September 14, 1997.
23Ponce de León, 19ff.
24Keen, idem.
25Tscherigi develops this point in his treatment.
26See Tscherigi, who is generally favorable to much of the missionary effort.
27Wolf, pg. 31.
28Wolf, pg. 32.
29Tscherigi.
30Diaz Stevens, pg 169
31Castells, pg. 70 ff.
32Our Word is Our Weapon, pg. 19ff.
33Ponce de León, pgs. 22-37, citing the essay published by Comandante Marcos on January 27, 1994.
34In 1992 an amendment to Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution recognized Indians’ distinct cultural contribution to the nation, Ratified in 1917, the Mexican Constitution did not explicitly mention Indians, until the amendment. Article Four now reads
as follows: The Mexican Nation has a pluricultural composition, originally based on its indigenous peoples. The law will protect and promote the development of their languages, cultures, uses, customs, resources and specific forms of social organization and will guarantee their members effective access to the jurisdiction of the State. In the agrarian judgments and procedures in which they are part, their juridical practices and customs will be taken into account in the terms established by the law.

35 Cleaver, pg. 86.
36 Cleaver, pg. 88.
37 Castells, op. cit. pg. 86.
39 Beinin and Stork, pgs. 4-5.
40 Beinin and Stork, pgs. 5-6.
41 Beinin and Stork, pg. 6.
42 Castells, 17.
44 Castells, pg. 12.
45 Castells, pg. 13.
46 Castells, pg. 124.
47 Castells, pg. 124.
48 Beinin and Stork, pg. 9.
50 Wallerstein, 2004b stresses the belief that the current world-system under domination by the United States is now in decline and that capitalism will be replaced.
51 Fandy, pg. 147.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY
Adán Stevens-Díaz


