

1 THE STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD

*If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst.*¹

—Thomas Hardy

*These days of universal death must be days of universal newbirth,
if the ruin is not to be total and final!*²

—Thomas Carlyle

BRINGING A NEW DAWN

According to an ancient Chinese proverb “It’s better to be a dog in times of peace than to be a human being wandering in times of chaos.”³ Today we cannot live as peaceful dogs. For modern human beings, the only choice is to persevere through the tumult of what has increasingly been defined as the “global century.” In fact, if one word could encapsulate the zeitgeist of our time, the strongest contender would surely be *globalization*.⁴ Although the present-day flow of commodities and consequent interconnectedness between peoples and cultures has many historical antecedents,⁵ globalization in its twenty-first century form is unique in its intensity, range, speed, and transformative technology.⁶ The shelves of bookstores groan under the weight of texts that seek to refine, expand, or reinterpret the meaning and significance of this new phenomenon. Some have argued that because of globalization the world has become flat, while others say it is still a very rugged place.⁷ We do not intend to add to this already too copious literature.

Instead we set our sights on analysis of some of the many political organizations and social movements that fervently oppose capitalist globalization. We call them aurora movements because they promise a new liberating dawn that will banish the dark injustices of the previous era. As a Zapatista manifesto puts it: "If this world does not have a place for us, then another world must be made . . . What is missing is yet to come."⁸ This is only one example of popular protest against the insecurity and rootlessness associated with the "explosion" of the free market ideology.⁹ It began in the 1990s as violent street protests and increased support for antisystem populist-nationalists spread from Latin America to Europe. The collapse of the financial systems in Asia led to widespread panic and riots culminating at the end of the old millennium in the "Battle of Seattle," where thousands of demonstrators, ranging from traditional trade unionists to militant ecological activists, took over the streets in protest against the meeting of the World Trade Organization. Although the protest was quelled, it engendered a new unity (however fleeting) among a wide variety of opponents to the globalization process.

The 9/11 jihadist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon brought a new phase to the struggle, demonstrating that some zealots were quite willing to destroy this world to bring another. The military conflicts that ensued were felt by those on both the antiglobal left and antiglobal right as a confirmation that imperialism and war were the touchstones of an inhuman globalization based on suffering and misery. And so the twenty-first century was born in fire, fury, and blood. Subsequently, a global financial meltdown raised fresh doubts about the sustainability of the path taken by neoliberal globalization and added increased urgency to the search for radical alternatives to save a world apparently plunging into chaos.

Oppositional movements can be purely instrumental, but the ones we will discuss have much higher ambitions. They span the political spectrum from right-wing groups and activist intellectuals in Europe to left-wing political parties in Latin America, along with the "movement of movements"—the World Social Forum. We included as well groups with no apparent "wings" at all, such as Muslim "holy warriors," nomadic ravers, and the international "slow" movement. These groups gain inspiration from multiple contexts, cultures, and traditions. Some seek to recapture lost indigenous truths; some preach universalism; others worship the nation; while jihadists hope to return Islam to its primal roots. The more leftist of this varied lot have generally defined themselves as *alter*-globalizing or as "global justice" movements, to distin-

guish themselves from *antiglobalist* groups on the right, which are portrayed by their opponents as nationalistic, restrictive, and politically conservative.¹⁰ We shall show that the mind-set of the aurora movements blurs the old right/left distinction. As will become evident, whether they come from the right or left or from someplace completely different, they all wish to redirect the course of history and inaugurate a new world where human potentials are realized, justice reigns, and happiness is universal. All are more active than contemplative, polarizing rather than pragmatic. Their shared goal is to defy and transform, not adjust and reform.

These groups are also alike in that they are at one and the same time reflections and shadows of globalization. As active opponents to global processes, they must propose solutions that are global in their ramifications, while also reversing the order of the present. So, the affirmation of difference implies the construction of an alternative belief system with many of the same universalizing characteristics found in global capitalism. Just as global capitalism is accused of affecting *all* areas of life, the changes pursued by these oppositional groups are *total*. All these activists tend to see themselves as soldiers in an existential battle¹¹ for redemption of the world from the evils of globalization. They are, they believe, engaged in a life-or-death conflict between two expansionist models of the human future—one rational, bureaucratic, commercial, and immoral; the other spiritual, humane, heartfelt, and righteous. This battle, in its various permutations, is the subject of our book.

THE PAST OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FUTURE

In many ways the search for a new world is nothing new. Throughout Western history, there has been no shortage of movements that strive to abolish the injustice, indignity, and inhumanity of the present. Popular rebellions in the form of peasant uprisings and urban revolts were a significant force all throughout premodern times. Though many were driven by specific complaints (against taxation, for instance), others aimed to completely transform society. Millenarian movements built on a Christian narrative of sin, purification, and redemption were devoted to ushering in a promised land of eternal peace, prosperity, and happiness.¹² For example, in the early sixteenth century, the Anabaptist messiah Jan Bockelson declared the death of the old world and the advent of a new age of free love and equality. In the German city of Münster (heralded as the “New Zion”), 10,000 of his followers held off the army for

a year before their final defeat and annihilation.¹³ And in seventeenth-century England, “it seemed as though the world might be turned upside down” by the radical passions of the Levellers and the Diggers.¹⁴

The French Revolution of 1789 was undoubtedly the most influential, ambitious, and successful effort to transform the world; it was fueled by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, who, in the name of reason, questioned the existing traditions, superstitions, and institutions of the age. By eroding the foundations of the taken-for-granted universe, these thinkers opened the way for the revolutionary deluge. Gracchus Babeuf, swept along by the flood of history, prophesied that “all should return to chaos, in order that out of the chaos a new and rejuvenated world emerges.”¹⁵ As the romantic French historian Jules Michelet described the Revolution: “The world is waiting for a faith, to march forward again, to breathe and to live . . . Everything has gravitated towards one point, and that point now speaks forth; it is a unanimous prayer from the heart of France.”¹⁶ Inspired by the unifying “prayer from the heart of France,” a surge of movements aimed at the regeneration of humankind swept through nineteenth-century Europe and beyond. “No period before or after has experienced so luxurious a flowering of Utopian schemes purporting to offer a coherent, complete, and final solution to the problem of social evil.”¹⁷ Dostoevsky described the prevalent revolutionary attitude in his novel *The Possessed* as a “fire in the minds of men.”¹⁸ The revolutionary flame burned bright in Karl Marx’s impassioned declaration of communism as the liberating last stage of history. The 20th century would turn many of these utopian impulses into actual projects to liberate man from the evils of history, starting with the soviet attempt to make the communist ideal a reality. The sense of a “newbeginning” and the belief that “history itself was at a turning point” also nurtured the fascist quest “to purge civilization of decadence, and foster the emergence of a new breed of human beings which it defined in terms not of universal categories but essentially mythic national and racial ones.”¹⁹ The hope for radical transformation carried over into the Third World as well, where many anticolonial liberation movements promised not only the pragmatic advantages of an autonomous nation-state but also the launching of an entirely new epoch in human history. This millenarian intention was clear in the writings of Frantz Fanon, the intellectual prophet of the Third World anticolonial struggle, for whom “decolonization is not merely the establishment of a New State or the achievement of Sovereignty but the replacement of one species of man by another species of man. The world is turned upside down, the last become the first.”²⁰

According to Fanon, the struggle against colonialism “infuses a new rhythm [into existence], specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men.”²¹ Symbolic performances such as the so-called cargo cults²² that flourished among indigenous peoples in the Pacific islands and elsewhere during the mid-twentieth century also aimed at overturning colonial authority in preparation for the imminent arrival of a new golden age. So did the “Grounded Utopian Movements” such as the Rastafarians in Jamaica, the American Indian Ghost Dance religion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the Guatemalan Maya movement of the 1980s (among others).²³

Sadly, Marx’s utopian program of liberation provided the ideological justification for totalitarianism, the fascist project descended into the horrors of the Holocaust, the regimes of decolonized states often proved to be as exploitative and brutal as their colonial predecessors, and the bounty promised by the cargo cults did not materialize. In the era of “the God that failed,” it seemed that dreams of a blissful new age had become nightmares instead. As a result of these catastrophes, postwar antiutopian intellectuals from both the left and right repudiated any possibility of collective emancipation. On the right, Karl Popper portrayed utopian blueprints as inevitably dangerous, pernicious, and self-defeating. Ideal societies are known “only from our dreams and from the dreams of our poets and prophets. They cannot be discussed, only proclaimed from the housetops. They do not call for the rational attitude of the impartial judge, but for the emotional attitude of the impassioned preacher.”²⁴ From the left, Hannah Arendt asked: “And what else, finally, is this ideal of modern society but the age-old dream of the poor and destitute, which can have a charm of its own so long as it is a dream, but turns into a fool’s paradise as soon as it is realized?”²⁵ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who had intimate experience of one such “fool’s paradise,” knew where the blame lay: “Thanks to *ideology*, the twentieth century was fated to experience evil-doing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed.”²⁶

Others concurred. For Raymond Aron the time had come to “challenge all the prophets of redemption” and to celebrate the “advent of the skeptics.”²⁷ Judith Shklar agreed that “the urge to construct grand designs for the political future of mankind is gone. The last vestiges of utopian faith required for such an enterprise have vanished,”²⁸ while Daniel Bell proclaimed that chiliastic hopes, millenarianism, apocalyptic thinking, and ideology itself had come to “a dead end.”²⁹ In this same period Otto Kirchheimer described the transformation of

the ideological mass parties of old into political machines, centrist and practical, constructed with the sole purpose of winning elections. Instead of organizations devoted to provide “spiritual shelter” and a “vision of things to come,” the new type of parties would be committed to efficient, narrow, short-term goals suited to a time of “deideologization.”³⁰

However, the normative end-of-ideology narrative was seriously challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by liberation theologies, hippie and drug subcultures, civil rights crusades, antiwar activism, feminist protests, and a New Left committed to overturning “the system” and to achieving a total transformation of the modern world. The content of the dreamed-of utopia differed in its details but usually included the elimination of sexual and other taboos, the end of violence, the establishment of complete equality, and the rise of all-embracing communities of love and sharing. As the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) declared in 1962, “If we appear to seek the unattainable, as it has been said, then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable.”³¹ Or, as the protestors who took over the streets of Paris in 1968 declared: “In a society that has abolished all adventures, the only adventure left is to abolish society.”³²

Although these utopian visions failed, their reappearance led some to rethink the end-of-ideology paradigm. While remaining a proponent of rational liberalism, Isaiah Berlin took note of the resurgence of the “age-old dream” that “there is, there must be—and it can be found—the final solution to all human ills.”³³ The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski resigned himself to the “unavoidable” and “irreconcilable” conflict between skeptical and utopian mentalities. “The victory of utopian dreams would lead us to a totalitarian nightmare and the utter downfall of civilization, whereas the unchallenged domination of the skeptical spirit would condemn us to a hopeless stagnation, to an immobility that a slight accident could easily convert into catastrophic chaos.”³⁴ Anthropologist Victor Turner took a more positive view of utopianism arguing that carnivalesque upsurges of “liminality” and celebratory egalitarian “communitas” are necessary to offset an overly rigid social order.³⁵

But the majority of intellectuals remained certain that there were no possible positive alternatives to the status quo. Utopian movements were merely aberrations, soon to be subsumed in the inevitable march toward a rational future. This perspective received powerful confirmation with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Its collapse was taken as convincing evidence that the predicted “end” of history had indeed arrived, as well as the end of ideology and the end of revolution. Indeed, it seemed the Western world had entered a period

of “endism”³⁶ in which transformative utopias were no longer to be imagined.³⁷ Bureaucratic rationalism, it seemed, had crushed all rivals; representative democracy had emerged victorious; industrial capitalism was eternally triumphant. The only future imaginable was the “weary utopianism” of the unfettered free market as realized in the pure entrepreneurial spaces of monochromatic export processing zones.³⁸ Though some waves would continue to ripple across the surface, stormy conflicts over what political and economic (not to mention spiritual) systems should govern human affairs had been permanently settled. Francis Fukuyama, the most eloquent spokesman for this perspective, wistfully remarked in 1989 that “the end of history will be a very sad time.” Nonetheless, the “worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism” was a thing of the past. It had been “replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.”³⁹

Other social scientists and public intellectuals of the late twentieth century agreed that humanity had indeed permanently entered into a postrevolutionary era.⁴⁰ The worldwide spread of rationalism and capitalism had decisively eliminated all traces of outmoded radicalism except among the most inconsequential groups. War also had been finally understood to be repulsive, uncivilized, and economically counterproductive; it would soon follow the path of dueling and slavery and simply cease to exist.⁴¹ Even the nation would soon disappear, according to the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm. As he wrote: Despite “men’s and women’s longing for group identity” and notwithstanding ethnic “reactionary upheavals,” a “new supranational restructuring of the globe” would “inevitably supersede nation-states.”⁴²

The appearance of violent apocalyptic sects in the latter part of the twentieth century, such as Jim Jones’s Peoples Temple (whose members laid down their lives in what Jones called an “act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world”),⁴³ the Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo, and the Order of the Solar Temple, among others, were explained as vestiges of a bygone age of zealotry and irrational belief, reminding the majority how far humanity had advanced on the road toward its predestined goal of pragmatic reason. These sects and their destructive trajectories confirmed that it was time to “return millenarianism to the religious realm, where it belongs.”⁴⁴ From this perspective, expressions of apocalyptic imagination and the radical pursuit of transcendence would perhaps continue to exist, but only among a few religious fanatics and pathetic remnants of the 1960s.

Though there was strong dissent from the majority opinion:⁴⁵ With reluctance, nostalgia, and even a sense of tragedy, intellectuals at the turn of the millennium by and large accepted a present that brooked no alternatives. Benjamin Barber's famous essay about the forthcoming battle between the forces of McWorld (liberal globalism) and jihad (the tribal reaction of identity and community) entertained the possibility that "Jihad may be a last deep sigh before the eternal yawn of McWorld."⁴⁶ Francois Furet lamented: "Here we are, condemned to live in the world as it is."⁴⁷ The active quest for salvation in this world was no longer imaginable; the potential for redemptive political transformation had faded forever into the mist of history. Zygmunt Bauman complained that we were all living in a shameful "postideological" and "postutopian" age, with no grand designs except for the relentless pursuit of individual self-interest and happiness.⁴⁸ The struggle for another world was a ghostly remnant of a dead idealism, to be recalled with regret, but impossible to revive in a world "cold and grey" in which "a light has gone out."⁴⁹

THE RETURN OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FUTURE

While the end of the twentieth century was marked by a resigned acceptance of the demystification of the world and the predominance of instrumental rationality, the beginning of the millennium brought with it the unexpected "counterhegemonic" irruptions we mentioned earlier in our introduction. As a result, studies on "resistance to globalization" greatly increased. However, the bland term *resistance* does not adequately reflect the fiery hopes of movements that wish to totally overturn what they see as an illegitimate neoliberal order. For them, the defining struggle of our era is between liberal-capitalist "globalism" and its "ideological challengers."⁵⁰ The fate of the twenty-first century—and of humanity—will be sealed by the "clash between a singular market civilization . . . versus the possibility of a diversity of civilizations."⁵¹ The world itself has become both the stage and frame of reference for groups challenging the status quo, as a "global imaginary"⁵² becomes predominant, linking oppositional forces everywhere.

Within this new global consciousness, the old paradigm of social class has increasingly been replaced by categories such as "humanity" and "future generations," while class warfare has been subsumed by demands for identity and respect.⁵³ Furthermore, the ultimate goal of many of these movements is not restricted to achieving the emancipation of a territory, a people or a par-

ticular group—though such objectives often serve as the starting points for action. Instead, “the extent of the hoped for community-of-the-liberated” has been expanded to include all of humanity.⁵⁴ As we shall see, this also holds for “right-wing,” “left-wing” and “no-wing” antiglobalists. Consequently, there has been an increased focus on achieving solidarity among movements and transnational actors around the globe, all seeking the linked goals of liberty and respect. The current internationalization of resistance is not a wholly new phenomenon. Abolitionism and female suffrage had already developed international moral networks in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ However, as noted by Charles Tilly, “the international construction of ‘We’ became an increasingly familiar feature of twenty-first century social movements.”⁵⁶

A variety of theories have emerged to explain the rise of worldwide resistance to the capitalist global order and its future implications. Many authors have resurrected Karl Polanyi’s thesis that an unregulated market economy necessarily creates instability, the erosion of safety nets and communal bonds, which in turn inspires countermovements to reestablish community, belonging, and a sense of security.⁵⁷ World-systems theorists, focusing on the long term, understand the present antagonism to globalization as an example of a recurring pattern of resistance that is typical of periods of imperial collapse.⁵⁸ In a more heterodox fashion, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have argued for the existence of a new global revolutionary force—the “living thing” they call the “Multitude”—that transcends nation-states, ethnicities, and races. To them, this radical and shapeless force has created a counterempire engaged in a war of liberation that will end in “authentic social peace” and the arrival of a radically transformed world.⁵⁹

Much of this new literature, though accepting the multifaceted nature of resistance to globalization,⁶⁰ stresses fundamental underlying commonalities between rebellious groups who believe “another world is possible.”⁶¹ We will return to some of these perspectives in our conclusion. However, in our view, this research, useful as it is, has not yet achieved a comprehensive understanding of the *nature* of the present-day opposition to globalization. This is because the spiritually grounded and emotionally compelling redemptive aspect of resistance has been understudied and underestimated. Instead, the focus has overwhelmingly been on abstract and often mechanistic models that stress strategies of contention, mobilization, and activism or on the differences between leftist “global justice” alter-globalism and “rightist” nationalist antiglobalism, while ignoring other “no-wing” transformative movements. Utopian

impulses, conceptions of society and humankind, theories of emancipation and salvation, and the values, feelings, and experiences that motivate activists to struggle and suffer for their beliefs have tended to pass unnoticed.⁶² As a result, one study concludes: “There can be no new grand strategy or grand narrative across such a diversity of struggles.”⁶³ While we acknowledge that strategies differ, we argue that there is indeed a *grand narrative* based on a “common ethical core and a common mental map”⁶⁴ that has arisen in response to globalization. Theodor Adorno, in one of his final aphorisms, stated that in the face of despair the only available option “is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.”⁶⁵ This redemptive narrative is clearly voiced from within the varied movements we consider in the following pages.

A disinclination to address parallels in the way these movements understand and pursue their millennial goals is related to another significant absence in mainstream analysis of global resistance to the global order. With a few exceptions,⁶⁶ there has been a noticeable reluctance to include jihadis, nationalist groups, violent groups, “new new religions,” or ecstatic movements under the umbrella of resistance to globalization. Rather, there has been a tendency, as noted by Ronaldo Munck, to distinguish between “good and bad social movements” or “serious” and “less serious” groups and to exclude discussion of the “bad” ones for fear of tainting the others.⁶⁷ As we will show throughout this book, despite many apparent differences, there are nonetheless striking similarities in the discourses, beliefs, and motives of groups, whether “good” or “bad,” “global” or “nationalist,” “alter” or “anti,” “serious” or “frivolous,” “left” or “right,” which see themselves engaged in an all-out struggle to liberate humanity from its chains and bring about the dawning of a new era.