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## Radical Transformative Nationalisms Confront the US Empire

Globalization talk is passing its peak, and deglobalization is creeping into the discourse<sup>1</sup> (Bello, 2002). Globalization discourse is being overtaken by events. The concept swept through several academic disciplines despite its contradictory and contested nature and its neo-liberal biases, built in from its origins. Although Roland Robertson (1992) contends he was the first to use the term in print in the mid-1980s,<sup>2</sup> globalization had its first regular and consistent airing in *The American Banker* in 1978 (Urmetzer, 1999: 42). It has been impossible to put the genie into an academic bottle and give it a precise, operational meaning when globalization was popularized in non-academic, especially business, circles and continues to be used incessantly in news stories as if it were an objective phenomenon.

One of the main effects of globalization talk, in its popular discourse guise, has been to break down resistance to the entry of foreign transnational corporations and banks. Ulrich Beck (2000: 79) argues that 'the cosmopolitan gaze opens wide ... empowered by capitalism undermining national borders'. The term 'internationalism', used in its establishment, inter-statal sense, served a similar purpose. As George Grant (1965: 47) observed four decades ago: 'even the finest talk about internationalism opens markets for the powerful'. Beck contends, and I agree, that however globalization is understood, it 'implies the weakening of state sovereignty and state structures' (2000: 86).

In dialectical fashion, globalization talk of the neo-liberal variety has spawned its opposite. Many opponents of neo-liberal globalism or the *Washington Consensus* began a discourse on building an alternative to corporate globalization that goes by several names – global civil society, transnational civil society, globalization from below.<sup>3</sup> The assumption in these circles is that we are inexorably moving towards a borderless world and

that new forms of transnational community are forming, through the Internet and other means, which diminish or make redundant national bases of solidarity. Their concern is not to stop such a process, but to make it democratic through bottom-up processes directed by global citizens and global activists. This view has currency especially in the Minority World of core countries.

There is another take on globalization from critics of the Washington Consensus, which is widely held in the Majority World. In this view, globalization is a new term for *recolonization*. Which is it, a borderless world ruled by stateless corporations or rule by the US Empire and its allies, in which every other country must dismantle its borders, but the US strengthens its own? The answer to this question has enormous implications for a transformative strategy by the proponents of anti-corporate globalization. If neo-liberal globalization is capitalism going global and inevitably diminishing the power of nations and states, then the struggle against it must go global – as in ‘globalization from below’ (Falk, 1997). In this take, radical citizens’ movements are conceived of as in transition to becoming global or transnational. There is much talk about global civil society reclaiming something called the ‘global commons’ (Goldman, 1998). But if neo-liberal globalization is thought of as recolonization, then the main lines of contention are for national and popular independence struggles. And it is a question of reclaiming sovereignty over particular commons, for example indigenous land claims, and opposing the universalizing of a global commons, except for a few instances such as the ozone layer and global climate change.<sup>4</sup>

It is argued here that recent shifts towards a formal US Empire confirm the recolonization perspective and that, as a consequence, it is imperative to examine the traditions of the antidote to empire – that of radically transforming sovereignty movements or what I call positive nationalist movements.

### The Empire Strikes Back

Founded as a revolutionary republic that fought a successful war for independence from the great empire of the day, most Americans have always rejected the idea that their country is or should be the world’s great imperial power. But, on 20 September 2002, George W. Bush declared the US an empire in everything but name. It was the radical antithesis of the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Official theory had finally caught up with the practice of American unilateral acts of aggression and refusal to sign international agreements such as the land mines treaty and recognition of the International Criminal Court. By boldly asserting the right to wage ‘pre-emptive war’ against any country posing a potential risk and promoting ‘economic freedom beyond America’s shores’, including among its ‘non-negotiable demands’ respect for private property, the *National Security*

*Strategy* (White House, 2002: 17, 3) sweeps away pretences about upholding the principles of self-determination and other countries' declarations of independence.

Reasserting the US Empire turns aside notions of a borderless world and calls into question the concept of corporate rule, with its assumptions of anonymous and stateless corporations. The American Empire is spawning its antidote, as empires are wont to do, by reinvigorating contestations for sovereignty around the world. Many analysts attributed the re-election of Gerhard Schröder's 'Red-Green' alliance in 2002, which had earlier seemed to be headed for certain defeat, to Schröder's promise that he would not allow German backing for a US military attack on Iraq, even if the action had a UN mandate (Guardian Unlimited, 2002; Wallace, 2002). The unexpected victory of Roh Moo Hyun as president of South Korea in 2002 was at least partly attributed to his promise not to 'kow-tow' to the United States (York, 2002). After an initial round of genuine sympathy for those killed in the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York City, the US squandered the goodwill by policies widely seen as self-serving and arrogant. Anti-Americanism is on the rise around the world (Hale, 2002). Bush is the best motivator for sovereignty-seeking nationalisms.

Are there recent examples that the United States has been acting like an empire? Let us look at the attempted coup d'état in Venezuela in April 2002. When heads of state in the Organization of American States (OAS) met in the spring of 2001 behind barbed wire fences in old Quebec City, they made a big deal about adopting a democracy clause that would exclude undemocratic countries from OAS meetings. This was to show that they, not the protestors outside the barbed wire fences, were the real democrats (Thompson, 2001). The OAS democracy charter,<sup>5</sup> passed in September 2001, promises not to recognize any government in the Western Hemisphere that takes power through a coup, defined as an 'unconstitutional interruption or alteration of the democratic order', and to impose sanctions on those that do.

What was the response then to the first coup, the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, after the Democratic Charter was adopted? Pedro Carmona, head of Venezuela's Chamber of Commerce, seized power for two days, dissolved Venezuela's Congress, the Supreme Court, the attorney general's office, the national electoral commission and state governorships. He suspended the new constitution, which had been written by a constitutional assembly and ratified by the voters in 1999. Forty-eight hours later Chavez retrieved his presidency. There could not have been a clearer violation of the OAS Democratic Charter.

Did the OAS members take swift action to deny official recognition to the dictatorship and discuss imposing sanctions against Venezuela? Latin American officials quickly condemned it and eventually the Democratic Charter was formally applied for the first time. The OAS condemned the

'alteration of the constitutional order'. But the US government welcomed the coup and Canada was silent throughout the two-day operation.

US officials described the coup as a 'change of government', acknowledged that they had met with the coup leaders in the months before the coup, but denied they counselled them to stage the coup. This is hard to believe. A few months earlier, Secretary of State Colin Powell said the US would support a *transitional* government. So did James Wolfensohn of the World Bank. A transitional government with a president who had won a landslide victory at the polls? That could only mean a coup (Petras, 2002). Two former National Security Agency officers told British newspapers that the Pentagon had a force on standby to provide 'logistical support' to the coup leaders. The coup leaders had met regularly before the coup with Otto Reich, assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs in the Bush administration (Maass, 2002). A day after the coup, the US recognized the dictatorship. Big oil was ecstatic and oil stocks shot up in value.

In his book *9-11*, Noam Chomsky (2001) documents many recent examples of the US violations of the sovereignty and self-determination of other countries.

### Left Anti-Fascist Nationalism

Radical transformative nationalisms had their coming-out party in the great French Revolution of 1789, reaching their peak in 1793. The Revolution virtually created the terms 'nation' and 'patriotism' in their modern sense (Hobsbawm, 1962: 92). The revolution's supporters asserted that the principles of the revolution could and should apply throughout the world because they assumed there is a common human nature. Internationalism and cosmopolitanism developed out of these universalist beliefs. At the same time, the revolution also spawned the principle of national self-determination and the model of a world made up of nation-states. National defence of the Republic combined with direct democracy – socialism and 'sansculottism'. The latter was the radical, direct democracy fought for by the labouring poor of the French Revolution. Socialist and sansculottist strands were combined in the crucible of French citizens confronting an international ruling class alliance of émigré French aristocrats and the aristocracies of every other European kingdom, all of whom were intent on crushing the revolution. The Left simultaneously supported internationalism, nationalism or anti-nationalism alongside revolutionary patriotism and socialism (Cahm, 1979: 2–8). A similar scenario was repeated in many ways, in the anti-fascist nationalisms of the occupied countries of the Second World War. Socialists of the French Revolution saw little contradiction between the revolution's international and national ideas.

The nationalist traditions of the French Revolution extended from the great revolution through and beyond the Paris Commune of 1871. In theory at least, it was inclusive of all who supported radical democracy and it was not restricted to French language speakers or those of French ethnic origin. The ideal that was promoted, if not fully realized, was that of the 'citizen-people' pursuing popular sovereignty through direct government of the people (Thomas, 1979: 22–5). Because the nation was seen as the people rather than the state, international solidarity meant ties between one group of 'citizen-people' and another, not between states. It is this tradition which must be recovered and improved upon, if we are to successfully confront the US Empire, which uses determinist formulations of the inevitability of globalization, coupled with the Washington Consensus, to confound, persuade and crush those who would follow a different path.

It is often forgotten that the Left reached the zenith of its popularity in the Allied and occupied countries of the North during the Second World War, when broad sections of the Left were still determined to radically transform capitalism. The situation was not totally different from now. Then, democracy was threatened and those considered racial inferiors were wiped out en masse. Opposition to fascism and the Nazis encompassed broad alliances to support democracy and oppose official racism. And taking a page from the revolutionary nationalism of the sansculottes, resistance movements during the Second World War claimed to speak for France, Norway or Yugoslavia against the external, racist, international alliance of fascists who were supported, or acquiesced to, by major sections of the elites in most European countries (Hobsbawm, 1991: 146).

Even Eric Hobsbawm, whose contempt for 'nationalism' is readily evident (1991) and whose implicit model of nationalisms is the ethnically-based, reactionary one (pp. 9–10), concedes that the appeal of socialism and nationality are 'not mutually exclusive' (p. 123):

It is important to distinguish between the exclusive nationalism of states or right-wing political movements which substitutes itself for all other forms of political and social identification, and the conglomerate national/citizen, social consciousness which, in modern states, forms the soil in which all other political sentiments grow. In this sense, 'nation' and 'class' were not readily separable. If we accept that class consciousness in practice had a civic-national dimension, and civic-national or ethnic consciousness had social dimensions, then it is likely that the radicalization of the working classes in the first post-war Europe may have reinforced their potential national consciousness. (Hobsbawm, 1991: 145)

Anti-colonial struggles in the Majority World in the mid 20th century, almost universally used the language of 'national liberation' or 'national and social liberation'. Mohandas Gandhi was an anti-imperialist and an Indian nationalist, who was killed by a fellow Hindu, because Gandhi struggled to affirm the value of both Hindus and Muslims in a pan-Indian country that would

encompass all religions. Nehru called the recognition of the equality of the many religions of India 'secularism' (Rao, 1999: 28–61).

There were radical economic nationalist struggles in the semi-periphery of the North in countries such as Canada. It was Canadian Left nationalists/internationalists Tony Clarke and Maude Barlow, leaders of the mass-based Council of Canadians, who found the secret text of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) that was being negotiated at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1997–8. They led the successful international struggle to defeat it.<sup>6</sup>

I make the following points schematically and refer the reader to another of my writings (Laxer, 2001) to more fully substantiate them:

1. We live in the age of US imperialism and corporate rule. The most effective way to overturn Washington's New World Order, it is argued, is through promoting national and popular sovereignties, backed by international solidarities, rather than by trying to build a global civil society to encompass six billion people.
2. The creators of neo-liberalism in the 1970s saw radical nationalisms and popular democracy as their main enemies and waged an effective ideological campaign against them. Much of the Left today has acquiesced to this campaign.
3. Nationalisms come in many flavours from racist and reactionary to liberating and anti-racist. Dominant nationalisms in the empire and core countries usually support their country's imperialism, whereas nationalisms in the periphery and semi-periphery often, but not always,<sup>7</sup> aim to recover popular and national sovereignties. Reactionary nationalisms are best countered, it is argued, by promoting the alternative of transformative nationalisms/internationalism, which stresses the commonality of citizenship among diverse peoples in a single country, rather than through rootless cosmopolitanism.
4. Sovereignty-seeking, transformative nationalisms/internationalism are a major force in today's world, but dare not speak their name.
5. The economy can be re-embedded into society more effectively by deglobalizing the transnational corporations than by 'globalization from below'.

## 1. US Empire

Henry Kissinger (1999) said that globalization is a new word for America's dominant role in the world. Lawrence Summers, then Bill Clinton's Undersecretary of the Treasury, said in 1996: 'Our ideology, capitalism, is in ascendancy everywhere'. He argued that it was in America's deepest security interest

to make sure that every country follows what he called the 'globalist Washington Consensus' (1996: 3, 5).

Does the United States support national self-determination, whereas Europe supports multilateralism and continental integration? No. The US is unwilling to give up one iota of its national sovereignty; witness its fierce opposition to the International Criminal Court. But, as we have seen, it asserts the right to invade any country for pre-emptive reasons, under the *National Security Strategy* of 20 September 2002.

This is classical imperialist doctrine. Zbigniew Brzezinski's (1997) book *The Grand Chessboard* purportedly has biblical authority in George W. Bush's administration (Pilger, 2002). Using classical imperial formulations, Brzezinski states that nation-states will be incorporated in the new order: 'the three grand imperatives of imperial geo-strategy are to prevent collusion and maintain dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries compliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together' (Brzezinski, 1997: 40).

While there is wide agreement in the Majority World that globalization is another word for recolonization,<sup>8</sup> some critics in the Minority World are confused about the imperialist nature of globalization and the United States as the centre of the empire. This is, in part at least, because many of these critics share the New Right's cosmopolitanism and anti-nationalism and believe in the inevitability and positive nature of capitalism breaking down all barriers (Beck, 2000).

The idea that the heart of globalization is about capitalism going global for the first time, and represents post breaks with the past, appears to be shared fairly widely (Reich, 1991: 3). David Held et al. (1999: 3-5) characterize this perspective as *hyper globalist*, a perspective common among the Left as well as the Right. But Held and his co-authors fail to recognize that it is also shared by a portion of what they refer to as 'transformationalists', a category that needs to be broken down between those who stress historical continuity and those who emphasize qualitative breaks from the past. Cosmopolitans like Held share the view with neo-liberal hyperglobalists that the 'nation-state' is inevitably withering away, and that this is a good thing (Archibugi and Held, 1995).

Capitalism has had powerful globalizing tendencies from the start: witness the connections between the beginnings of the industrial revolution in British cotton textiles in the late 18th century, the transporting of African slaves to the US cotton-growing South and the subjugation of India into the British Empire. Until then, India had been the world's acknowledged leader of the finest cotton textiles for over two millennia (Gupta, 1979: 3).

If globalism is neo-imperialism, the most effective way to resist it is through many struggles for national and popular sovereignties. By national sovereignty, I do not mean the nation as the state, but the nation as the people,

as in self-defined nations. Many countries such as Canada and India are not nation-states, but multi-nation states.

The main task in each nation and country is to confront the corporate-oriented state backed by the US Empire, and to turn it into a citizen-oriented state. This is a gargantuan task, which is being undertaken seriously only in a few countries like Brazil, by Lula da Silva and the Brazilian Workers Party. An important element for success in such projects, I argue, is positive nationalisms/internationalism and the building of bottom-up, democratic alternatives.

## 2. Concerted Neo-liberal Attacks on Nationalisms<sup>9</sup>

Neo-liberal globalism represents a full-scale assault on democracy. Architects of neo-liberalism in the 1970s, such as those at the Trilateral Commission, targetted an 'excess of democracy'. The Trilateral Commission identified what they saw as an equally dangerous target – nationalisms. David Rockefeller, former chairman and CEO of Chase Manhattan Bank, and prime initiator of the Trilateral Commission, called for 'a massive public relations campaign' to explain the necessity for the 'withering of the nation-state' (Nelson, 1995).

This echoed a long-standing theme in US strategic circles. At a Western Hemisphere conference in 1945, Chomsky (1999) observes, the US was deeply concerned with 'the philosophy of the new nationalism' that was spreading over Latin America and the world. That philosophy, according to US internal records, aimed to bring about a wider distribution of wealth and raise the masses' living standards. 'Radical' or 'economic nationalism' operated on the heretical principle that the first beneficiaries of a country's resources are the people of that country rather than US and other foreign investors, and locally allied elites. Washington prevailed and the conference called for an end to economic nationalism in all its forms (pp. 21–3).

After emancipation from colonial rule, national liberation movements confronted the 'neo-imperialism' of multinational corporations, especially in the early 1970s. Citizens were mobilized by appeals to democracy and nationalisms, couched in anti-Western or anti-American discourses. Campaigns in the Third World, Europe and Canada resulted in 336 takeovers or buyouts of transnational corporations during the first half of the 1970s (Stopford et al., 1991: 121).

In the 1990s, Summers (1996) updated Washington's anti-nationalist theme by disparaging all critics of what he called Washington's 'globalist economic policy' as 'separatists'. For Summers, separatists are economic nationalists who promote sovereignty.

Over the past 15 years, the attack on economic and cultural sovereignties



was renewed through 'globalization babble'. It was much more effective than previous attacks, partly because much of the political Left and Centre also endorsed the neo-liberal position that globalization is an objective phenomenon that necessarily diminishes or ends nations, nationalisms and sovereignties, and that we are currently witnessing qualitative breaks from the past.

The Left's version is often the mirror image of neo-liberalism: if they say globalization from above, we'll say globalization from below. Mirroring one's opponents' message is understandable, but it can show how much neo-liberal ideas opposing national sovereignty have set the agenda. Much of the globalization-from-below rhetoric is anti-national. Some of it is opposed to national sovereignty as well.

David Rockefeller co-founded the Trilateral Commission in the early 1970s to fight against the twin threats to global capitalism: national sovereignty and an 'excess of democracy'. Thinking his remarks would stay behind closed doors, Rockefeller told the 1991 annual Bilderberger Conference of economic and political elites that:

We are grateful to the Washington Post, The New York Times, Time Magazine and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost 40 years. It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years. But the world is more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national autodetermination practiced in past centuries. (Draffan, 2000: 34)

Why do neo-liberals attack popular nationalisms so vehemently? Hobsbawm supplied part of the answer when he argued that the ideal world for the transnationals is to have thousand of mini states, none of which is powerful enough to stand up to their power (quoted in Nairn, 1995: 97). The other side of the coin is that the transnationals need the US Empire to protect them, which in turn sparks anti-imperialist popular nationalisms to oppose the empire.

The achievement of deep democracy, in the sense of citizens taking control out of the hands of ruling elites, is most likely to succeed in rooted communities and in political units smaller than countries. Scale matters. But countries are potentially more equal adversaries of the US Empire and transnational capitalism than any other institution. The crucial question then is whether citizens can turn corporate-oriented states into citizen-oriented states, which also nurture democracy in subnational units. Without the solidarity of positive nationalisms, it is argued, the state's potential role as regulator of capital and provider of public services is more likely to become a servant of transnational corporations and capital.

States in the South have less capacity and less autonomy than core states.<sup>10</sup> They often lack the resources to gain legitimacy through providing

public services and redistributing wealth. As a result, many states are controlled by one group, leading to divisive ethnic tensions. Rooted communities like the Zapatistas have little choice but to seek support at national and international levels, beyond their indigenas base.

Most countries are ethnically and racially diverse and are ideal sites for both confronting the US Empire and corporate rule, and for building citizenship ties across ethnic and cultural diversities.<sup>11</sup> Daniel Bell (1987: 14) had it wrong when he contended that 'the nation-state is becoming too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life'. On the contrary, in most cases, countries are big enough to challenge global corporate power, but small enough to enable strong solidarity ties to emerge and to develop effective, grass roots democracy, often in subnational units.

### 3. Nationalism is a Misnomer

Nationalism has such a variety of meanings and such a diverse history of close association with virtually every kind of politics that it is facile to say categorically that one is for or against 'it'. There is no it. There are only them. Despite its nominal form, 'nationalism' is not an 'ism' like socialism or liberalism because it has no set of theoretically coherent propositions, nor a universal vision. This is a major reason why it is treated with such condescension by intellectuals (Anderson, 1991: 14 makes this point). Right nationalisms are often profoundly racist, exclusionary, authoritarian and aggressive, while Left nationalisms are those that seek deep democratic transformation of global corporate capitalism through their conjunctions with anti-colonial, socialist, feminist, ecological and anti-racist movements, and are associated with internationalism. Rather than generating their own content, nationalisms reflect most of their ideological content by the friends they keep (Lloyd, 1995).

It is important that people increasingly identify with all of humanity, to feel protective of other species and the whole planet's environment. But people also exhibit strong needs to identify with smaller communities than an undifferentiated six billion people. The current rise of ethno-cultural nationalisms is caused not only by the individualizing effects of the capitalist market, but by the erosion of deep democracy. Shared active citizenship is the strongest glue that can bind together the people of heterogeneous countries. When this glue loosens through the erosion of real democracy, many people may be enticed to turn to exclusive ethnic, religious or cultural nationalisms to give them a sense of belonging.<sup>12</sup>

The best way to counteract such exclusive nationalisms is through positive nationalisms/internationalism. By positive nationalism, I do not mean the straight adoption of the civic nationalisms which grew out of the French and American revolutions. There are several problems with these civic

nationalist traditions – not least, the crushing of heterogeneity that was expressed in the French Revolution in the early 1790s as ‘a nation one and indivisible’. This slogan was made famous seven decades later by Abraham Lincoln during the US Civil War. Both French and American civic nationalisms had imperialist tendencies from the outset, and assumed that the expansion of their borders represented a widening of the sphere of liberty in the world. Such a view denied the self-determination of other countries.

Elsewhere, I have developed an ideal type of positive nationalisms by which to evaluate existing nationalisms, which I summarize here (Laxer, 2001: 15). First, how inclusive are nationalisms? All countries restrict who can enter and who has full citizenship rights. Nations without states, such as the Kurds, decide who belongs and who doesn’t. However, although all nations restrict membership, there are great variations in inclusiveness. Do they welcome and include immigrants? Do they base membership/citizenship on descent or long-term residency? Second, how much respect is there for ‘deep diversity’? This question may revolve around the strength of minority nationalisms rather than ideology. Are unity and conformity compulsory and in which areas of social-political life? Are they nation-states or multi-nation states? If the latter, what collective rights and recognition do minority nations have? Do they have the recognized right to secede democratically? Third, how deeply democratic are they? Fourth, are they expansionist, sovereignty seeking or neither? Do they respect the self-determination of other nations? Fifth, are they inward-looking or inter-nationalist in the people-to-people sense?

I view as positive nationalisms that come closest to inclusiveness, embracing deep diversity, being substantively democratic, refraining from expansionism and supporting inter-nationalism.

#### 4. Sovereignty-Seeking, Transformative Nationalisms

Although many writers support what I call Left nationalism/internationalism, most of them go to great lengths to avoid the nationalist label. They may advocate national or popular sovereignty in cases such as the campaigns to defeat the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) at the OECD in 1998, or to defend the sovereignty of Venezuelans or Brazilians to retain their own democratically elected president against manoeuvrings by the United States and locally allied elites. But many feel compelled to condemn all forms of nationalism, because of fears about its association with racism.<sup>13</sup>

In *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, Chantal Mouffe (1992: 11–12) advocates a strong civic nationalism in the tradition of the Great French Revolution, and exhorts us to recover ‘identification’, ‘allegiance’, and the indivisibility of ‘political association’:

While it is important to defend the widest possible pluralism in many areas – culture, religion, morality – we must also accept that our participation as citizens in the political association cannot be located on the same level as our other insertions in social relations. To recover citizenship as a strong form of political identification presupposes our allegiance to the principles of modern democracy and the commitment to defend its key institutions. Antagonistic principles of legitimacy cannot coexist within one single political association; to accept pluralism at that level automatically entails the [disappearance] of the state as a political reality.

In this passage, Mouffe advises placing the political community above all other loyalties. But disingenuously, she never calls the political community the nation, but refers to members of the political community as citizens. She also discusses political association in relation to the state. Thus citizens and the state are presented in a very abstracted way, but nations and nationalisms are missing. To what political unit could citizens belong if not to the nation? Mouffe writes a paragraph to avoid the term nationalism, but endorses the elements of the civic nationalist tradition of the French Revolution. The result is that while the term nationalism is missing, Mouffe goes way too far in demanding unity and allegiance to the nation over other forms of association.

Paul Hawken (2000) supports the sovereignty of nations as the means to realize democracy, but wants to eliminate nationalism, as if citizens could be active in their own political community, but have no feelings of attachment to it. Hawken wrote the following about the 1999 *Battle in Seattle* against the World Trade Organisation (WTO):

Those who marched and protested opposed the tyrannies of globalization, uniformity, and corporatization, but they did not necessarily oppose internationalization of trade . . . Globalization refers to a world in which capital and goods move at will without the rule of individual nations . . . Nations do provide, where democracies prevail, a means for people to set their own policy . . . Globalization supplants the nation, the state, the region, and the village. While eliminating nationalism is indeed a good idea, the elimination of sovereignty is not.

There has been much pathbreaking writing about nations and nationalisms in the past two decades.<sup>14</sup> But there has been little exploration of the anti-globalism potential of Left nationalisms, those that involve attachments to and support for the (relative) sovereignty of the political community to which one belongs. Since nationalisms get most of their content through the associations they keep (Lloyd, 1995), Left nationalisms are those that seek deep democratic transformation of global corporate capitalism through their conjunctions with anti-colonial, socialist, feminist, ecological and anti-racist movements. They work primarily at the level of the nation, the state and through international solidarity ties with similar movements abroad which also seek popular and national sovereignties.

At present, we see three competing nationalist currents:<sup>15</sup>

1. *Nationalist globalism* is a discourse of elite support for the neo-liberalism of the Washington consensus, coupled with a creed about the inevitability of global integration. The national imagery employed uses machismo language about the country being globally competitive and portrays its leaders as global shapers at important international forums.
2. *Defensive territorialisms* use right-wing populist discourses that are xenophobic, anti-immigrant and anti-minority. The social base is populist and these currents may or may not oppose neo-liberal globalism. The strength of defensive territorial nationalisms varies from country to country.
3. *Internationalist nationalisms*<sup>16</sup> are positive nationalisms in the sense that we defined them. They oppose neo-liberal globalism and support the welfare state and popular-democratic alternatives to corporate rule. They forge international and transnational solidarity links with anti-corporate movements in other countries.

The following are urgent, future research questions about these competing nationalisms in specific current contexts:

- (a) How does neo-liberal globalism interact with the three strands of nationalism and its discourses?
- (b) How do the three competing nationalisms deal with the nation's changing multiple identities?
- (c) How do the transnational and the global become internalized and part of the national?
- (d) Is opposition to foreign ownership and corporate rule portrayed as xenophobic and how does the race of the dominant foreign owners affect this?
- (e) To what extent do contestations for national sovereignty coincide with and diverge from struggles for popular sovereignty and bottom-up democracy?

## 5. Deglobalize the Transnational Corporations

Currently I am exploring the strategy of overturning neo-liberal globalism by deglobalizing the transnational corporations (Laxer, 2002). This strategy is an alternative to global civil society proposals. I provide a short summary here.

Most nationalisms and democracy are rooted in territorial communities, cultures of particularity and commonwealths of immobile wage-earners. Bottom-up democracy is contingent on vibrant communities where there are common memories of citizens' struggles and gains against national and local

power structures. Civil societies, independent of the state and of the transnationals, are essential to the democratic practice of citizens over rulers (Fraser, 1992). So is anti-racism, massive redistribution of wealth from North to South, and inter-national ties among social movements. But it is naive to think that a united global civil-society of six billion people can act in concert to control corporations and restrain the incursions of the US Empire. A more compelling and realistic strategy is to deglobalize and break up transnationals into parts, to be controlled by democratic communities, conceived in a variety of ways. Marx described such communities as 'associated producers', while others have advocated cooperatives, workers' ownership, wage-earners' capital funds, and ownership and control by local, subnational or central governments.

Global integration is not new; it has developed in waves and counter-waves. Even the World Bank (2002: 14–15) acknowledges, but decries this. In some respects, the previous globalization wave, from the 1870s to 1914, pushed the world toward greater integration than now. In other respects global integration was less than now.<sup>17</sup> First, international migration was greater in proportional terms then – estimated at about 10 percent of the world's population in 1914 and only a little more than 2 percent now (pp. 10–11). Second, there were higher levels of foreign ownership in the Majority World in 1914 than today (p. 43). Third, states which were on the gold standard had less control over their monetary policies and there was less variation in central banks' interest rates.

The shocks which substantially reversed global integration in the last great wave were delivered by world wars, the 1930s Great Depression, and the Russian Revolution and the threat of its spread. The world wars, separated by the Great Depression, comprised the first half of what I call a period of re-nationalized economies in the 1914 to 1945 period. The world wars ended most commerce between enemies, encouraged nationalizations of 'enemy alien' property, and increased the role of the state in the economy. State planning in capitalist countries originated during the world wars. Except for some holdings from allied countries, the enlarged warfare state tended to exclude foreign capitalists. The Bolsheviks expropriated foreign and domestic property and repudiated all foreign debts. But contrary to rhetoric about workers' internationalism, the Soviets practiced their authoritarian, state-bureaucratic system in one country. In the capitalist world, the 1930s Depression led to protectionism, a great decline in world trade, and a fall in the US stock market to 9 percent of its 1929 value. It took 25 years to recover that value (Yardeni, 2002). The Japanese stock market crash of 1989–1990 triggered a period of deflationary recession in Japan, which is not over yet, and which currently may be spreading to other Minority World countries after the speculative stock market burst (Greider, 1997: 228; Rubin, 2002).

The second half of the phase of re-nationalized economies, 1945 to the

mid-1970s, was characterized by several nationally-oriented economic models. First were the reinvigorated challenges to capitalism from the Chinese and other communist revolutions and the extension of the Soviet system into Eastern Europe. Second was the massive decolonization of the Third World, led by India, from 1947 to the mid-1960s. Anti-colonialism was characterized by radical nationalisms in nation-less countries, in which it was asserted that the people of a region, not foreign capitalists, had the right to control their own resources, economies, culture and politics. The prevailing model was called 'import substitution industrialization'. You cannot get a more 'inwardly directed development' doctrine than that.

Third, in the rich Minority World, Keynesianism produced welfare states or deepened existing ones. The development of welfare states was due to national, not international, class compromises, which assumed that domestic capital would remain largely at home, to provide full employment. Applied Keynesianism transformed the late 19th-century caretaker state from about 10 percent to roughly 50 percent of the economies of Minority World countries by the mid-1970s (Desai, 2000). In the US, military Keynesianism, combined with a less developed welfare state, rivaled that of welfare Keynesianism elsewhere in the portion of the economy that was state-led. The public sector was necessarily national and almost entirely off limits to foreign ownership and international trade. That is what accounts for the current negotiations over liberalizing health, education and municipal services at negotiations of the General Agreements on Trade in Services (the GATs) in Geneva. They are about transnational corporations demanding entry into these potentially huge, lucrative sectors, from which they had been largely shut out.

In the 21st century, shocks from the five sources listed above have varying likelihood to recur and challenge or significantly reverse global integration under the Washington Consensus model. The post-1945 age of nuclear weapons and deterrence stamped out major wars on the soil of northern countries and, thankfully, they are unlikely to reappear any time soon. Revolution is also very remote in the affluent North and would not stand a chance unless there was a severe and prolonged deflationary depression. The latter is not impossible, given the levels of speculative capital moving around the globe and the 'irrational exuberance' (to use the phrase of Alan Greenspan, US Federal Reserve Board Chairman) of the value of capital and real estate. But we cannot rule out the re-emergence of strong pressures to extend the welfare state in the North.

If it comes, the spark for a radical break from capitalist globalism is likely to emerge first in the Majority World, perhaps in Latin America, where we may again see wars, revolutions, depressions and anti-colonial movements. A new source of shock is also very likely – increasingly severe and increasingly frequent major environmental catastrophes. Some or all such shocks may lead

in the future, as they did in the past, to successful politics of substantially deglobalizing economies, or to put it differently, to significantly re-nationalized or de-linked ones.

### Conclusion

Capitalists are the true globalizers, not workers or citizens. If capital, especially speculative capital, is increasingly mobile across borders, labour is not. Borders have been stiffened since the events of 11 September 2001. Even if they had not been, most people do not want to emigrate from their home communities. Most who leave are forced to do so by repression or lack of economic opportunities (Stalker, 1994). The global market is the arena for transnationals, business professionals and the rich, where power is based on unequal command of property. The political arena for most wage-earners and peasants is in countries and regions where aspirations to democracy and equality are widely held, if not always realized.

Instead of globalization from above to uphold corporate rights, we need, not globalization from below, but positive nationalisms and genuine internationalism from below. Ordinary people cannot be organized and coordinated at the level of six billion people in the same way as the elite can meet at Davos or Bilderberg. Nor would it be desirable. The kind of future world most of us want is one of great, cultural and national diversities, in which distinct peoples, on a scale much smaller than all humanity, have the sovereignty to decide their own futures. But those who struggle for their own sovereignty must be equally committed to promoting mutual understanding among nations, to reversing environmental degradation and to radically redistributing the world's wealth.

### Notes

- 1 A Google search on 19 December 2000 yielded 1050 hits for the term 'deglob-alization'.
- 2 Robertson writes that use of the noun 'globalization' was not recognized as a significant concept in academic circles until the early or even middle 1980s (Robertson, 1992: 8).
- 3 For a start on the global civil society literature, see Lipschutz (1996) for a positive view and Laxer and Halperin (2003) for a critical view. For a good entrée into the literature on transnational civil society, see Florini (2000). Richard Falk (1997) first coined the phrase 'globalization from below'.
- 4 Land, water, sub-surface resources, and bottom-up democracy are, and should, for the most part, be controlled by smaller, sovereign commons.
- 5 Passed on 11 September 2001, the 28-clause Inter-American Democratic Charter



- defines democracy and establishes procedures to undertake not only when democracy has been formally ruptured, as in a coup, but when democracy is seriously altered and at risk. Accessed at [www.oas.org](http://www.oas.org) on 12 December 2002.
- 6 For the role of Clarke and Barlow and the importance of English-Canadian economic and cultural nationalism in the anti-MAI campaign, see Johnston and Laxer (forthcoming).
  - 7 See the discussion below on 'defensive territorial' kinds of nationalisms.
  - 8 I heard this view expressed at every stop in a nine-lecture tour of Indian universities in January 2001. Several books highlighted the recolonization theme: Raghavan (1990), Saul (1993), Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (1990).
  - 9 Some of the arguments and formulations in this section are elaborated in Laxer (2001).
  - 10 I develop the points made in the next three paragraphs at greater length in Laxer (2001).
  - 11 This is not to imply that separatist movements are never legitimate.
  - 12 I make the case that is set out in this paragraph in Laxer (2000).
  - 13 These points are developed at greater length in Laxer (2001).
  - 14 In philosophy, a debate is taking place on the compatibility between liberal, or social liberal, nationalism and cosmopolitanism (*The Monist*, vol. 82, no. 3, July 1999). For a start into the literature, see Hobsbawm (1991) and Miller (1995).
  - 15 This three-strand formulation is based on a book being planned by James Goodman, Teresina Gutierrez-Haces, Gordon Laxer and Oyvind Osterud.
  - 16 Goodman (2002) provocatively calls them 'cosmopolitan nationalisms'.
  - 17 Capital, especially speculative capital, now moves around the world instantaneously and at much greater volumes than in the earlier period. While permanent migration is now lower, travel is much more frequent and this changes people's consciousness. On the cultural side, millions of people watch or listen to the same entertainment and sports spectacles and converse on the Internet, and this creates a greater sense of humanity as one entity.

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