

CHAPTER ONE

The West in Disarray

When the cold war came to an end, many in the West assumed they were the winners, the new Masters of the Universe. That's why they are now so disoriented by a world that is turning out to be very different from the one they expected.

In the early 1990s, after undeniable success in a forty-five-year-long struggle against the Soviet Union, Westerners became intoxicated with their victory. In the United States, the mood was one of unabated triumphalism. President George H. W. Bush talked about creating a “new world order” that would last for decades and serve the interests of all mankind. Francis Fukuyama, then still a neoconservative, announced the “end of History” on the grounds that the victorious West could no longer be challenged by any rival ideology or power. Western values—such as the market economy and democracy—would be extended irresistibly throughout the world. After all, hadn't even China's Communist

leader Deng Xiaoping, in the late 1970s, embraced the market economy? The common assumption was that nothing could stop the advance of democracy and liberalism.

The 1993 warnings of Samuel Huntington, who, on the contrary, thought that the new world would be threatened by a “clash of civilizations,” were all but forgotten. Huntington’s message was dismissed as too disturbing, too politically incorrect, too distant from the prevailing American self-assurance and European optimism. Huntington identified nine civilizations: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Chinese, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese. Critics nitpicked his categories and challenged the notion that civilizations were “clashing.” Weren’t we all brothers and sisters?

Nevertheless, Americans believed their leadership and benevolent hegemony to be more necessary than ever for global stability and security. The more innocent Europeans and Canadians, on the other hand, were keen to start cashing in their peace dividends. They believed that the end of the cold war would lead to the birth of a true “international community.” Despite the failures of the post–World War I “league” of nations and the post–World War II “united” nations, this time a true community of nations would be born. Within it, all states would share the same, Western-inspired values, now recognized as universal. They would work together according to the rules of multilateralism, which would give smaller states a voice and allow the majority to make decisions in the general interest. The few holdouts—so-called

rogue states—would be marginalized and, if necessary, dealt with more forcefully. Conflicts would be foreseen and major problems addressed by the United Nations Security Council, which would finally be able to play its proper role, just as it did when its five permanent members legally and legitimately authorized the 1991 war to liberate Kuwait. The rare wars that did take place would be wars of “zero deaths,” at least on the Western side. International law would develop, denying impunity to war criminals and deterring new crimes. “International civil society” would become increasingly influential, forcing states to be more transparent, ethical, and moral. In some areas, international civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would even take over the role of states.

Among Europeans, as well as among some American Democrats, the idea took hold that traditional state-to-state international relations were outmoded. *Realpolitik*—according to the dictionary a policy based on the balance of power with no regard for ideology—was rejected indignantly as having been responsible for the horrors of the twentieth century. The idea was to replace it with multilateral “global governance” by “new actors” (such as civil society, NGOs, the media, and international lawyers), free trade, and human rights diplomacy. During the 1990s, gigantic UN summits—political versions of high mass—brought together the nearly 200 UN member states to deal with the environment (Rio de Janeiro, in 1992), social development (Copenhagen, 1995), the role of women in society (Beijing, 1995), and other

issues. Everyone thought that this sort of multilateralism was the right method for dealing with “global challenges.”

This optimism culminated in the so called “Millennium Declaration,” adopted on September 8, 2000, by all the member states of the UN. In this thirty-two-point statement, we were reminded that “the United Nations is the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development.” The text outlines the fundamental values on which international relations in the twenty-first century must be based—liberty, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. Who could possibly be against any of that?

As for globalization, the elites saw only its positive side, which would allow world trade to open up each part of the world to the others. Ending protectionism would tear down the barriers between peoples, reduce tensions over identity, and eliminate the tendency to look inward. Globalization would generate unprecedented global economic growth. Everyone, all individuals and all nations, would benefit—a “win-win” situation, as Americans like to say—giving birth to an integrated global culture somewhat like the “fusion” cuisine you can get in good restaurants in New York or Shanghai.

One major consequence of the West’s feeling of superiority—and Manichaean worldview—was that foreign policy became superfluous. After all, since the West had won, why bother to negotiate with repugnant regimes? Why deal with despots? Why

seek to compromise with dictators when Western values would be imposed on them whether they liked it or not, by choice or by force? All we had to do was threaten, lecture, and penalize the holdouts. Public opinion, the media, and Western NGOs would rise up in indignation every time the need to resolve some conflict led diplomats or political leaders to deal with an undemocratic regime in Asia, Africa, or the Arab world (or even with Putin's Russia). In the name of some higher morality—a form of diplomatic puritanism—they would criticize states that were allegedly blinded by *realpolitik* or commercial interests. “How dare you speak to that dictator!?” “How can you possibly trust such a government!?” And, as if there were really a choice between the two, “How can you choose business deals over human rights!?”

These illusions took various forms in the United States, and they were different from—even contradictory to—their forms in Europe. The divergence of the United States and Europe can be traced to the evolution of a set of ideas that first appeared in the United States.

From 1989 to 1992, George H. W. Bush and his foreign policy team—in particular, Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft—pursued a classic form of American leadership. Following in a long Republican tradition, its hallmarks were realism and strength without too much arrogance, sermonizing, or belligerence. America came across as a sort of “reluctant sheriff,” to borrow a term from former Bush foreign policy official Richard Haass. Together with Helmut Kohl,

François Mitterrand, and Mikhail Gorbachev, the Bush team oversaw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar era of global power with determination and a sense of responsibility. In the 1990 Gulf War, they stuck closely to the mandate authorized by the United Nations—to liberate Kuwait, and when that job was done they focused immediately on the Arab-Israeli peace process.

During President Bill Clinton's two terms in office (1993–2000), American power expanded, economically as well as politically. Indeed, it came to dominate world affairs so thoroughly that the old term “superpower” no longer seemed to suffice. That's why, in 1998, well before Bush's election, I coined the term “hyperpower” to evoke the United States' unprecedented power and influence. In French, the prefix “hyper” is descriptive, not judgmental. I did not coin the term to criticize or condemn the United States, but simply to describe a reality and to issue a warning about the consequences of such dominance.

Clinton managed to make the immense power of the United States seem acceptable to the rest of the world. He did it through his exceptional sense of global political realities—a rare quality among American political leaders—as well as through his charisma and openness and his belated but sincere efforts to bring about Middle East peace. As president, he managed to contain a desire for hegemony that was deeply ingrained in the attitudes of the American public, the U.S. media, and certain think tanks.

The Republican Party had by 1994 become highly reactionary, and its victories in the congressional elections that year

demonstrated how strong the hegemonic impulse had become. The party's new mantra was marked by rigid nationalism; the reassertion of national interests; opposition to any limits on national sovereignty; a ruthless conception of relations with allies that was hierarchical, unilateralist, and exploitative; and the belief in a purely military approach to conflict resolution. The Republican victory in 1994 signaled a harder line than the one embodied in Ronald Reagan's slogan "America is back." George W. Bush's own slogan, unveiled on September 12, 2001—"We have found our mission"—would confirm that harder line.

The transformation of the Republican Party had deep roots. In the 1960s, southern, working-class whites, appalled by President Johnson's policy of racial desegregation, abandoned Roosevelt's Democratic Party and joined the Republicans, tipping it toward right-wing populism thirty years later. That populism was further hardened by a powerful evangelical movement estimated to represent some 40 million people. The movement's literalist reading of the Bible leads it to align itself with an Israeli Far Right that opposes any sort of territorial compromise, a great irony given the ideological and racist traditions in much of the southern United States itself. At the same time, some Republican elites began to join the neoconservative movement. The movement was misnamed, because the former leftists who joined it—many initially had been Democrats, intellectuals, and Trotskyites—did not become conservatives but, instead, reactionary revolutionaries. During the cold war, they had fought tooth and nail against the détente policies of their *bête noire*, Henry Kissinger, whom they

saw as too soft on the Soviet Union and other enemies of the United States. They viewed Ronald Reagan as a gift from above, grudgingly endured the realism of the first President Bush, and attacked President Clinton personally and politically in every conceivable way. They criticized Clinton for failing to win the world's respect for America, for refusing to use force to overthrow Saddam Hussein, for weakening America's global authority in a futile search for Middle East peace, and, finally, for tarnishing the presidency with the Lewinsky affair.

These "neocons," initially led, in the 1970s, by Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson and his aide Richard Perle, argued that there was no such thing as a Palestinian problem, which they saw as an invention of an irrelevant Israeli Left and of anti-Israeli groups the world over. Remarkably, they pedaled this view even when the Oslo peace process was in full swing. Their alternative solution was to democratize—whether the locals liked it or not—the neighboring Arab countries, which, they somehow believed, would make those countries pro-Western and pro-Israeli. That process would allow the Israelis to keep the occupied territories, as desired by Likud, the right-wing party created by Menachem Begin in 1973. Perle and others spelled out this attempt to get around the Palestinian problem in a 1996 publication called *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*. Their approach continues to this day to have serious consequences for the situation in the Middle East, Israel's security, and relations between the West and the Arab and Muslim worlds while leading U.S. foreign policy to a dead end.

The neocons creatively grafted Woodrow Wilson's democratic messianism—which had so irritated Clemenceau in Paris in 1919 and still today dominates Western thinking—onto the nationalist American tradition of Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft. Before the election of George W. Bush and the Iraqi quagmire that followed it, this unique worldview enjoyed wide influence in the United States, affecting even some Democrats and the public at large. Vietnam had been forgotten. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Americans had once again found confidence in their Manifest Destiny.

To the American public (and to Europeans as well, for that matter), democratizing the world seemed to be an urgent and realistic task, not to be questioned. Madeleine Albright, Clinton's remarkable and dynamic secretary of state, organized a conference in Warsaw in June 2000 for representatives of about 100 countries to found a "Community of Democracies." And even now, despite the Iraq fiasco, Senator John McCain talks about creating a "League of Democracies." After all, if democracy is the near-term end state for all the world's peoples, and if Westerners are destined to be its vanguard, why wait? Why not just overthrow the rogue regimes? And why allow despots at the UN to insult you or prevent you from taking action?

Albright wasn't alone in her belief that democracy could be spread rapidly and successfully around the world. American strategists had already been tempted to try to pursue the democratization project through an enlarged NATO—which had become a

sort of mini-UN they could control. The NATO strategy was just the most recent expression of the vision expressed by Winston Churchill to Eisenhower's first secretary of state, John Foster Dulles: "Only the English-speaking peoples count; together they can run the world."

In 2003 Europeans believed themselves to be entirely opposed to Bush and to what French scholar Pierre Hassner has called "Wilsonianism in army boots." In reality, they largely shared a belief in the West's democratization mission. The French public was highly sympathetic to the notion of the West's "right"—or even its "duty"—to intervene, as embodied by Bernard Kouchner, the founder of Doctors without Borders, who became French foreign minister in 2007. The rise of this notion was nothing less than the rehabilitation of the *mission civilisatrice* that European colonialists used to invoke but which had been forgotten since decolonization. Much of the news media took it upon themselves to ensure that this democratizing activism remained the top priority for Western foreign policy.

Where Americans and Europeans disagreed was over the question of the use of force. Since 1945, and even more so since 1989, Europeans have believed that they live in a post-tragic, posthistorical, and for federalists, even postnational world. Theirs is an ideal world, democratic and peaceful, governed by universal values, norms, and laws and by collective means of security and conflict prevention. In a sense, they dream of a world populated only by western Europeans. They have adopted a simplified form of the

notion of “soft power” formulated by American professor Joseph Nye, the difference being that Nye never believed that soft power alone would suffice. At the same time, and in an entirely contradictory way, they believe it imperative (proselytizing in a manner as old as Christianity itself) that they impose their values on everyone else. For Europeans today, speeches, conditionality, sanctions, and interference are all acceptable and legitimate, whereas war, bombing, and military occupation are not, even if legally authorized. Americans, in contrast, accept the use of force and consider it legitimate (because it’s *their* force) even as they debate the means used. They often even find it admirable to “go it alone,” in contrast to Europeans (with the exception of some European neocon imitators), for whom the use of force must be based on a legitimate, multilateral decision—an attitude Americans of the Bush years denounced as a form of appeasement. This division is the source of the split between the Americans and Europeans over the Iraq war. The American neoconservative writer Robert Kagan was not wrong, in 2002, to characterize this difference as one between Mars (the United States) and Venus (Europe).

Except for these differences over the use of force, which were exacerbated by the Iraq adventure, Westerners today largely share the same beliefs in the universal values of democracy—or rather the same illusions about their ability to bring it about from the outside. My point is not that the basic rights called for in the United States, Britain, and France at the end of the eighteenth century—and taken up in the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights in 1948—do not express a deep and universal human aspiration. No one, in any culture, wants to be deprived of liberty, let alone abused or murdered. Moreover, many non-Western figures, such as Nobel Prize winners Amartya Sen, Mohammed Yunus, and Shirin Ebadi, defend such rights. But when we fight against the relativism of concepts like “Muslim values” or “Asian values,” we fail to see that some of our principles are construed by many not as universal rights but as tools for extending Western supremacy. Many of those living in the developing world—what used to be called the “South”—have longer memories than we do, and they do not find all our recent and very convenient self-forgiveness (particularly among Europeans) very convincing. They remember that the West often violated its own principles and today abides by them only selectively. What were once double standards are now in many cases triple or even quadruple standards. Thus Westerners fail to understand why these rights, unquestionably universal in their eyes, are not yet universally perceived as such. They wallow in their indignation. We would be better off listening to people like the Iranian philosopher Ramin Jahanbeglou or the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who argue that universalism must not be founded on Western values alone.

The dangerously naïve concept of imposed democratization is a product of such parochialism. The triumphalism of the 1990s led many in the West to start believing in the process of democratization as an experience akin to that of Saint Paul: nonbelievers see the light (after a jarring fall) and are converted. Thus in

2003 Americans believed that democracy would rise from the ashes of Saddam Hussein's regime just as in 1979 Jimmy Carter expected it to emerge from the fall of the shah of Iran. Democracy would naturally follow tyranny, wouldn't it? But democracy has never taken hold instantly, or completely, in any Western country, not even in the United States. Have we forgotten the extermination of the Indians, slavery, the Civil War, and racial segregation, let alone current problems like high rates of voter abstention, the role of money in elections, lobbies, and the Hollywoodization of politics (admittedly less and less particular to the United States). And in Europe, what about the centuries of bloody revolutions and vicious repression? In France, have we forgotten the 150 years between the first elections in 1795 and the right to vote for women?

Democracy has never been imposed from the outside as if by Martians. Ramin Jahanbeglou, who was imprisoned in Iran for his human rights activism, argues that the West should seek to promote it without seeking to impose it. Whenever France—whether in its revolutionary, imperial, or colonial phase—has tried to impose its principles, the effort has backfired. Democracy everywhere is the fruit of a complex process that moves at different speeds, sometimes forward, sometimes backward, with internal and external dynamics, but always essentially endogenously. When, during one of our long and friendly conversations, I said to Madeleine Albright that “democracy is not like instant coffee,” I was unwittingly using a notion formulated by the Mexican writer

Octavio Paz, who said that democracy was “not Nescafé.” How could we confuse the *reestablishment* of democracy (after 1945 in Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and some Latin American countries) with the effort to *establish* democracy in places where it had never taken root (in Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2002)? How could we compare homogeneous populations (like Japan’s) with heterogeneous ones (like Iraq’s or Nigeria’s)? How could we not see the difference between easily exportable democratic techniques (such as monitored elections) and aspects of democratic culture (such as respect for minority and individual rights) that take years to take root? In short, how could we confuse autonomous democratization specific to each society and democratization imposed from the outside? The idea of imposing democracy from the outside is even more absurd when it’s being done by former colonial powers or by an America that has lost legitimacy in the eyes of much of the world.

Consider everything that Westerners—Americans and Europeans alike—have tried to do in the name of democratization in terms of declarations, speeches, sanctions, and conditionality toward the Russians, Chinese, Arabs, Africans, and others, and then measure the meager results. And further consider the fruits of such efforts implemented through war. It’s enough to make one think that seeking to export our democratic regimes at all costs almost inevitably produces the opposite of the desired goal. Unless, of course, the real—and deeply cynical—goal is to stall the rise of emerging powers. But that’s a different issue. And besides, the apostles of democratization are generally sincere.

But Europeans (and Canadians) are misguided in ways that even most American Democrats are not, for example on the issue of international civil society. Although no one can really identify what international civil society consists of (voters, NGOs, the UN, the media?), Europeans and Canadians see in it the key to getting beyond the nation-state, a sort of panacea for achieving modernity. In the United States, by contrast, no one really questions the concept of national sovereignty.

Europeans see the UN and multilateralism not only as diplomatic tools for achieving compromise but also as a means to move beyond the nefarious concept of the national interest—or in European newspeak, “national selfishness.” International law is supposed to deter war criminals from committing their heinous acts or, if not, at least put an end to their impunity. Beyond that, and more problematically, it’s supposed to help resolve fundamental political issues—to perform miracles, in other words.

In the eyes of the well-meaning Left, managed globalization is an oxymoron. To them, globalization cannot be managed because it is by definition chaotic. And the French harbor their own particular illusions: the idea of a powerful Europe and the related notion, dear to former president Jacques Chirac, of a “multipolar world.” One of the “poles” would of course be Europe, led by France, and so the idea is seen in France as a sort of substitute for French power. The multipolar world would constrain American power. In the real world, however, the kind of multipolar world emerging suddenly before our eyes looks nothing like France’s comforting vision.

In fact, neither American hubris (what's left of it after Iraq), nor European sincerity, nor French idealism and grandiloquence serve us well. Neither America's enormous power nor Europe's earnestness in seeking to strengthen international law and establish European norms is having the desired effect. Even worse, in our media-dominated societies, in which people spend on average three and one-half hours per day watching television, it is increasingly difficult to conduct a serious and coherent foreign policy focused on the long term. Our societies insist on "transparency" and "proximity" to power. People are constantly bombarded with new information and are skeptical of their leaders and the information they are given. Foreign policy suffers when it's based on superficial or unrealistic analysis and held hostage to domestic politics and constantly changing public opinion.

We've seen this all coming for some time now, but it keeps getting worse. Henry Kissinger used to complain that Israel was weakened by having only domestic politics and no foreign policy. Isn't that more or less the case with our media-obsessed democracies today?

All this high-minded Western universalism is well-meaning, but it is also arrogant, unrealistic, and paternalistic. It is a new form of *unrealpolitik* that is now running up against the reality of seemingly intractable divisions. Those divisions were apparent, for example, in 1995, when an extremist Israeli killed the Middle East peace process by assassinating Yitzhak Rabin, the most courageous and far-sighted Israeli leader of the past several decades. Rabin,

who cannot be praised enough, used to say that he would “fight terrorism as if there were no peace process” but also that he would “pursue the peace process as if there were no terrorism.” This allowed him to deny the terrorists the ability to control events. To be sure, after Rabin’s death, the peace process launched by the first President Bush and James Baker staggered on for a while, only to crumble altogether after the election of Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996. Since then, there has barely been any hope for a lasting peace, except briefly in 2000, the year of missed opportunities. And this open wound poisons the entire relationship between the West and the Islamic world.

The notion that people are inevitably converging toward global consensus is also contradicted by the resurgence of intercommunal or ethnic conflicts—for example in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Rwanda, India, and the Muslim world. Thus the weeklong UN World Conference against Racism (a seemingly consensual issue if there ever was one) in Durban, South Africa, which ended on September 7, 2001, failed over the issue of how to treat the history of slavery and its political consequences. The failure was a brutal reminder—to the optimists who needed it—of the huge gap on this issue between the West on one hand and Africans and Muslims on the other.

When George W. Bush became the forty-third president of the United States in January 2001, he took office with a view of domestic and international policies that stupefied and frightened Europeans. They thought these ideas were outmoded, even though

Europe itself is no more than a protected little island in today's world. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, however, demonstrated spectacularly that in a globalized world, terrorism is also global. The attacks were particularly stunning because they were perpetrated against American citizens, who thought—along with the rest of the world—that America was invulnerable. But it turned out that even the hyperpower was vulnerable to suicide attacks.

September 11 is not the dividing line between the old world and the new that many suggest. It is not of comparable importance to the fall of the Berlin Wall. But September 11 did give Vice President Dick Cheney and the neoconservatives the pretext they needed to engineer a reorientation of the Bush administration's foreign policy. That policy was already Manichaeian, but now it would become even more missionary, military, and interventionist. Iraq made the ideal target because it was unable to defend itself and its regime was indefensible. The case for war was built on mendacious arguments and on the desire to demonstrate American power. The reasons included American pride, energy strategy, support for Israel, and the promotion of democracy. French President Jacques Chirac's vehement opposition and clear warnings about the mess that would follow an invasion could not change American minds. That only happened once the Americans realized they had made a mistake. They did not, however, necessarily realize the link between that mistake and the fundamental premises that led to it.

On the European side, political and economic integration had advanced rapidly in the late 1980s and early 1990s under the lead-

ership of François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, and Jacques Delors. With impressive foresight, they began to prepare for the end of the bipolar era in the best possible way, by reinforcing Europe—a process they pursued right up until the 1992 ratification of the Maastricht treaty, which created the European Union (EU). The process moved forward again when eleven countries adopted the euro as their common currency on January 1, 1999, and in successive stages as fifteen more countries became EU members over the next eight years. On the institutional level, however, the federalists' attempt to leap ahead in the 2001 Nice treaty—supported by Germany to increase its weight in EU institutions and by France for less understandable reasons—led to a dead end with the demise of the 2004 Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, or constitutional treaty. That agreement was rejected by 54.7 percent of the French on May 29, 2005, and by 61.6 percent of the Dutch a few days later. In 2007, EU leaders tried again with a simplified treaty signed in Lisbon, but that treaty was also rejected in a referendum, this time in Ireland, in June 2008. In the wake of these setbacks, Europeans have seemed uncertain about what they want, which undermines the prospects of a multipolar world containing a strong European pole.

In fact, in 2008, after a decade of big UN summits, seven years after the spectacular adoption of the Millennium Declaration by the United Nations, and three years after the provisional agreement on the EU constitution, the world is no “community,” and Europe is a long way from being a major power. To be sure, there's a community for finance ministers and foreign ministers from 192

countries, for the 120,000 bureaucrats who work for international organizations, and for thousands of NGOs from all over the world. And no doubt the world economy is globalized for lots of top executives, bankers, traders, pension fund managers, corporate lawyers, the media elite, proponents of “world food,” the fashion industry, and the world of the high arts. But not for ordinary people. Except for this very thin, Americanized, and globalized veneer, we have not succeeded in building a community that brings the world’s peoples together. Not only have we not yet arrived at Thomas Friedman’s “flat” world, we might actually be moving in the opposite direction.

Many in the West thought that they already lived in an “international community” with common values, where people worked to meet the “challenges of the third millennium” according to modern, multilateral rules. A few remaining rogue states, according to this illusion, could be persuaded quickly to rejoin the liberal and democratic consensus. But the reality looks very different. It shows that the vagueness of the concept of an “international civil society” hides the same balance of power as exists in traditional international relations. China, for example, is brilliant at infiltrating international conferences with its so-called GONGOs—government-operated nongovernmental organizations. We must realize that this international civil society is represented by those who want to see it become more powerful. Of the world’s 192 countries, nearly 130 have no NGOs at all. And the NGOs with the most resources and connections are Western, almost all of them American or British.

Where the economy is concerned, the world has certainly been “decompartmentalized” by the end of the East-West conflict and the falling of trade barriers. Increased trade has led to strong economic growth: from 1950 to 2003, international trade grew by an average of 6 percent a year and worldwide production by 4 percent. Since 1975, international trade has grown from 8 percent of world GDP to 20 percent. The world seems unified and harmonized by the instant distribution of images and information and the dramatic fall in the cost and time of transportation.

If we didn't have to worry about unresolved political issues or injustice, it would be easy to be optimistic. We could focus on the great prospects for world growth that result from the huge, unsatisfied needs of poor countries, the unlimited opportunities for mergers and acquisitions, capitalism's inexhaustible capacity to regenerate itself even as companies wage merciless war on each other, or the appetite of multinational firms in the West and the developing world, not to mention the gold mine represented by the opportunity to convert an ecologically destructive economy into an ecologically sustainable one. But that would be to look at the world with blinders on, because the world remains marked by staggering inequalities, deepening conflicts, deep resentments and misunderstandings, the desire for revenge, mutual fear, and ticking political time bombs.

These dividing lines do not lie between the “North” and the “South,” terms that no longer mean anything. Rather, they lie between the rich and the poor. Overall, poverty is falling. But in some places—in the former Soviet Union, Africa, and some Latin

American countries—it has been aggravated for years by the massive liberalization blindly promoted by international financial institutions in the name of the “Washington Consensus.” That term was coined in 1989 by the economist John Williamson to describe what the Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz later called “market fanaticism.” What is indisputable is that visible and measurable inequalities are growing. They are caused by the enormous accumulation of speculative revenues received by the “winners,” whether they be countries, regions, companies, or individuals.

As François Morin explains in his book *Le nouveau mur de l'argent* (The new wall of money), there is a fundamental disconnect between the real economy and the financial sphere. In 2002, the value of international trade in goods and services came to around \$8 trillion, but the value of financial transactions was over \$1,150 trillion—far more than the foreign reserves of all the central banks in the world put together. All these transactions take place with little transparency and are made by a relatively small number of traders and managers of hedge funds and pension funds—four-fifths of whom are registered in tax havens—and by sovereign wealth funds.

Within ten years of having invented a supposedly magic formula—the unregulated application of derivatives to an ever-increasing range of financial instruments—even the inventors of that formula came to realize that it was a fantasy. The 2007–08 financial crisis demonstrated that there’s no such thing as an economy on autopilot. This sort of casino capitalism has led to

enormous growth among the world's richest 2 percent, who own 50 percent of the world's assets, whereas the poorest 50 percent of people own just 1 percent of the assets. At the same time, according to the Millennium Declaration and the UN's World Food Program, 1 billion human beings live in "abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty," and 854 million are undernourished (consuming less than 1,900 calories per day). Thirty-four million of these very poor people live in rich countries.

Globalization fanatics think they can deal with these huge inequalities through the market, in which young and innovative entrepreneurs cleverly take advantage of price differentials between two continents—on Friedman's supposedly "flat" earth. But they see individuals as nothing more than undifferentiated consumers of goods and services, rather than as members of a political community rooted in a particular culture. The defenders of free trade always focus on the benefits to the consumer but never on what people lose in terms of democracy when the market rules. And the environmental degradation caused by this form of globalization is rarely taken into account by free marketeers. At least some economists are now starting to pay attention: a report by Lord Stern in the United Kingdom concluded that in the absence of concerted action, global warming alone could reduce global GDP by up to 20 percent. Avoiding the worst effects of climate change will cost at least 1 percent of GDP, or around \$6 trillion.

There's also an enormous gap between countries that are relatively well protected from major environmental threats and those that, in contrast, are more exposed to them. According to Al Gore,

in *An Inconvenient Truth*, in the more vulnerable countries some 200 million environmental refugees could be driven from their homes by rising water levels. Many countries also remain unprotected against health threats from dangerous chemicals, unlike Europe, which is covered by the European Commission's REACH program (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemical substances). And in many countries nothing is done to prevent shortages of clean air, clean drinking water, farmland, livable areas, forests, silence, space, and beauty.

Then there's the gap between the relatively secure and settled populations of the thirty richest countries and the world's 175 million refugees (3 percent of the world's population) who move around year by year, and sometimes, at the end of their long and dangerous journeys, are exploited or forced into hiding.

Sadly, another division is the one separating various civilizations, even if we deny this reality because it scares us. To be sure, only small minorities within these civilizations actually seek confrontation—out of ignorance or fanaticism. In the Muslim world, the clash is between two opposing minorities, religious fundamentalists and moderate modernists, who are struggling to win over the much larger masses. Of course, the lack of education has a lot to do with it. But we've got to admit that this clash of ignorance, prejudice, misunderstanding, and mutual fear risks becoming a true Islamic-Western "clash of civilizations," an extension of the clash within the Islamic world between modernists and fundamentalists. These tensions, moreover, are exacerbated by irrational Western fears of Arabs and even Islam in general, by some

Islamists' desire to take revenge for the crusades or Western imperialism, and by the Arab-Israeli conflict. And we must also admit that the extremists are managing to attract sympathy and support even from beyond their traditional followers. Thus we see an Islam seized with fervor and self-affirmation in reaction to forced Westernization and to numerous failures. In Western countries, on the other hand, secularist activists, feminists, and human rights advocates clamor to put an end once and for all to this "Islamofascism," inevitably linked in their eyes to terrorism.

Nor must we forget, under this same heading, the world's many other divisions, like Islam/China, Islam/Hinduism, Islam/Orthodoxy, China/India, and Latin America/Andes/Iberia. The universal power and influence of these divisions should make us think twice about what to do about them rather than just reject the notion of a clash of civilizations out of hand.

Finally, we need to consider the striking divisions everywhere between the powerful and the vulnerable. In the first group are the American hyperpower, other rich countries, and emerging countries like China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Vietnam. In the second group are dozens of the least-developed countries and failed or disintegrating states.

How are Westerners reacting to all this resistance, which contradicts their worldview, interferes with their policies, and will soon threaten their interests? Broadly, they waver between a hard-line and a softer approach, but on the whole they do not doubt the superiority of their values and interests, and very few accept a fundamentally realistic approach.

We must make a distinction here, however, between the economic world, whether in America or in Europe, and other areas. Business people, given the field they're in, have to be realistic. They see the world economy as it is today; otherwise they would fail miserably. So they figure out what's really going on, take a close look at what's changing, and act according to their interests. Thus is the world economy constantly adapting and expanding its hegemony thanks to the mechanism of globalization. Meanwhile, an unconstrained and permanent competition is taking place between Western styles of capitalism just like that between the West and the emerging countries. The main victim of this conflict could be the European social welfare system. Globalization pays no heed to the human, cultural, and political realities that get in its way.

Cultural, social, and political actors, on the other hand, are able to see the world however they want, without reality ever setting in. They project their conceptions on the rest of the world and wallow indefinitely in a media-driven narcissism without ever having to pay the price for their idealism. It's their countries that are paying the price.

Shocked by the fall in their popularity around the world, the Americans initially refused to change.¹ They intransigently

1. According to the Pew Research Center, between 2000 and 2006 those with a favorable view of the United States fell from 83 percent to 56 percent in the United Kingdom, 62 percent to 39 percent in France, 78 percent to 37 percent in Germany, 52 percent to 12 percent in Turkey, and 75 percent to 30 percent in Indonesia.

reasserted their values, preeminence, and exceptionalism, and they reaffirmed their right to wage preventive wars if their security so required. This hard-line view, which rules out the possibility of giving up the Western monopoly over world affairs, is held not only by American neoconservatives but also by many Europeans, although the latter rarely admit it. This ill-informed approach consists of thinking in terms of a “Western bloc,” in particular vis-à-vis the Islamic world, Russia, and China. It means refusing to show flexibility and—in the case of the United States, as Zbigniew Brzezinski has pointed out—always wanting greater security than others. It means going on the offensive to promote our democratic “values” and defending human rights. It means keeping all options—including the offensive use of military force—on the table. This approach leads some to refuse to rule out the idea of turning NATO into an armed “alliance of democracies” by enlarging it to Ukraine and Georgia, or even to Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Israel, and by getting it involved—with hardly any debate—outside of its traditional zone of operations, as it has in Afghanistan.

But this approach is running up against certain realities. There are strategic realities, for example. After the Republicans were routed in the 2006 midterm congressional elections, mostly due to the Iraq fiasco, President Bush felt obliged to suggest that he was ready to be pragmatic and open to suggestions on what to do. But the Democrats, who almost all voted for the Iraq war, have no alternative policy.

There are also economic realities. New players, including emerging countries and global companies based in places like India, China, Brazil, and South Africa, are starting to change the meaning of a globalization that was supposed to consolidate Western hegemony, not challenge it. In 2007, the Boston Consulting Group's annual list of the top 100 companies from emerging economies included 41 from China, 20 from India, 13 from Brazil, 7 from Mexico, and 6 from Russia. Already, emerging countries are responsible for 15 percent of global mergers and acquisitions and 37 percent of all foreign investment. Such developments are making Westerners nervous. Americans are very worried about the growth of Chinese exports. Despite decades of bitter domestic conflict over the issue, official U.S. support for free trade had remained solid, thereby changing the world. Today that official support is eroding. Representatives and Senators from industrial states threatened by trade have begun to call for protectionist measures, yet to be adopted given the continued support for free trade—at least for the United States—among Republicans and Clintonian Democrats. Americans are also petrified by the power China derives from its massive holding of Treasury bills—hundreds of billions of dollars' worth—though no one really knows what to do about it. Some Americans (like Bill Clinton) see China as a potential partner. Others (like George W. Bush) see it as a strategic competitor. And still others (NGOs and the media) see it as a target for the promotion of human rights. In practice Washington treats China like all three at the same time.

As for Europe, its citizens are more worried now than at any time since the end of the cold war. Europeans see that the world has not become the “community” they had hoped for. Their reaction is somewhat contradictory. They follow a soft and ill-defined line seeking greater security but at the same time reasserting their “values” and hoping that their “soft power” will suffice. They think they can manage by asserting their desire to put morality at the heart of their foreign policy, thus protecting themselves from any old or new threats. This morality does not, however, extend to the point of refusing to sell Airbus planes to China or to purchase oil from the Arabs or natural gas from the Russians. But the combination of these principles is an odd one, reminiscent of the Kantian moralists once criticized by the French writer Charles Péguy: “Their hands are clean, because they have no hands.” This contradiction gives European publics and elites an uncomfortable feeling of disarray.

Westerners today see themselves sitting atop Mount Olympus and believe more than ever in their alleged “mission” to run the world. But if they refuse to accept that they have lost their monopoly over world history—Westerners make up only around one billion of the world’s six and one-half billion people, after all—they will find it increasingly difficult to realize their goals or even defend their interests.

An alternative approach is possible. It would consist of following a firm but realistic course—figuring out what Western interests are and negotiating as well as possible, both directly and at the UN

and other international organizations, with the newly emerging powers and everyone else. That is the approach already taken at the World Trade Organization. If Westerners do that, and start making use of all aspects of foreign policy, they will be able to preserve immense long-term influence, especially if they learn to use it intelligently. In the fall of 2006, the Iraq Study Group, directed by James Baker and Lee Hamilton, proposed this sort of realist course. The administration rejected it out of hand even as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice seemed in some ways to take inspiration from it.

All this makes the U.S. elections of 2008 particularly important—both for Americans and the world at large. Have Americans understood the real reasons for the failures of the Bush administration in the Middle East? Will they learn not to try to fight what Philip Gordon, in his 2007 book *Winning the Right War*, has called “the wrong war”? Will they manage to formulate policies that will defend, firmly and effectively but realistically, their interests and the interests of the West vis-à-vis emerging, reemerging, or already emerged powers? Will they treat their allies like responsible partners, and will they manage to be responsible themselves?

We can only hope so.