

“A Mix of Poison and Food is Still Deadly”

Looking back upon the history of achievements and innovations of Man, nearly all of his existence has been utterly stagnant. Thousands of years ago, the life of a human remained relatively unchanged for centuries on end. In the last two hundred years, however, mankind has begun to change; innovation and invention became more ideal as living conditions grew less harsh. In the last century, man came to grips with the changes and ideas these new innovations can bring, and their impact upon old traditions and cultures. New technology and old traditions brought the world into a new type of warfare: A World War. And not only one, but two of them. In Alexander Stille’s “The Ganges’ Next Life,” he discusses the mix of old traditions and new education from technology in a Hindu hydraulic engineer. This man bathes daily in a river, the Ganges, according to his old Hindu beliefs, which he knows to be horribly polluted and disgusting according to his education. Like this man, technology is creating conflict within those it ‘infects.’ Technology is sweeping the world at an amazing pace, and often faster than societies are ready for it. In “Global Realization” by Eric Schlosser, he shows the sweeping effects of globalization and technology upon society and culture, and oftentimes, the conflict it creates with societies not ready to let go of old, outdated traditions. Old traditions limit the scope and ability of technology, forcing it to be used in cumbersome ways, which detriment both the user and people around him. The conflict this creates, much like the conflict between religion and science, can sometimes turn hostile, as people resist change, and turn to the leading destroyer of old culture and traditions: Technological globalization. In Mary Kaldor’s “Beyond Militarism,

Arms Races and Arms Control,” she discusses the new type of war brewing throughout the world, fueled by resistance to change. Instead of governments or states waging war, small groups attack symbols of what they perceive as instruments of change, blending technology and old traditions of holy war or otherwise in a destructive way. Technology and tradition are constantly at war with each other; its groups feverishly try to negate the other’s existence. In order for new ideas to be used effectively, old ideas must be shunned for being outdated. Either one must live in a technological culture, fueled by change and innovation, or live in a purely traditional or fundamentalist culture, fueled by tradition and intellectual stagnation. Any mix creates internal conflict and resentment, as people resist the unpredictable nature of change. This conflict may turn external, causing people to strike back in unconventional methods.

Nearly all conflict in the world is created by two things: change, and the resistance to change. But more pronounced is change’s effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as change really took roots with increased innovation and invention, sweeping around the world with immeasurable speed, in “the process known as globalization. By globalization , I mean the increasing interconnectedness, the shrinking of distance and time, as a result of the combination of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and air travel,” (Kaldor, 2). As change and innovation create numerous ‘friends’ around the world so quickly, it also creates enemies just as fast, in traditional or religious groups. Nearly all that tradition and religion stands for in their belief structure is negated by technological change and science, pitting both against each other; one demanding belief in things without fact, one demanding thought and development of fact. But more importantly, people fear the change associated with technology and globalization. Just as the Church resisted new ideas from Galileo because they defied teachings of the Bible,

tradition resists new ideas, and had to be brought by technology into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century like a child in a tantrum: kicking and screaming. McDonald's, a seemingly innocent symbol of globalization and change, is often seen as the most evil of threats, creating resentment in all cultures. "In France, a sheep farmer and political activist named Jose Bove led a group that demolished a McDonald's under construction in his hometown of Millau. Bove's defiant attitude, brief imprisonment, and impassioned speeches against "lousy food" have made him a hero in France," (Schlosser, 17). But his hero wasn't truly against the 'lousy food' as he said he was. His fight was against change, probably because McDonald's doesn't serve sheep-burgers, and Bove would probably go out of business. But instead of blaming the outdated practice and traditions of Bove's occupation, he blames the company that forced him to change. "McDonald's has become an easy target," (Schlosser, 17) because of its symbolic nature of technological and fundamentalist states in response to the unpredictable nature of change. Communism is one example, and the religious group the Taliban is another. But perhaps the greatest separation between old traditional ideas of thought and technology is the economic rift between the two. The most technologically advanced countries are the most prosperous in the world, while the most traditional or fundamentalist are oftentimes the least prosperous; but instead of blaming their plight upon old failing traditions, they place the blame on the new ideas of thought. All this resentment turns into internal conflict; internal pressure inside the mind, turning a person into a time bomb that waits to be used.

This time bomb, properly manipulated, can have devastating effects. The people disenfranchised by change and technology because of blind insistence on old beliefs turn, in many cases, the violence to solve their problems. In this sense, truly anyone can openly resist

change and technology: “Farmers, leftist, anarchists, nationalist, environmentalists, consumer advocated, educators, health officials, labor unions, and defenders of animal rights have found common ground,” (Schlosser, 17). In fact, Kaldor’s New War focuses mainly upon groups opposed to change, with no real goal other to eradicate their source. These “networks are loose horizontal coalitions, unlike vertical disciplined armies of the past, a shared narrative, often based on a common identity, ethnic or religious, is an important organizing mechanism” (Kaldor, 3). Leading the technological globalization is the United States, with the most groups actively plotting its defeat and destruction than any other civilization perhaps besides Rome. These groups, instead of accepting the message of change brought by technology, instead wish to kill the messenger: working civilians and corporations, in an attempt to preserve a most stable, less hectic way of life. “In 1996, Indian farmers ransacked a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant in Bangalore, convinced that the chain threatened their traditional agricultural practices,” (Schlosser, 17). In fact, so many corporations have been attacked; it makes it hard to list every instance. “The networks have understood that they cannot take territory militarily, only through political means, and the point of violence is to contribute to those political means,” (Kaldor, 8). The goal is only to stem the flow of technology, and more importantly, change. However, technology and traditions do mix, with devastating effects. Militant Islam, regarded by the USSR as the biggest threat aside from the US, is slowly becoming a bigger threat in the world, by mixing a purely fundamentalist and traditional way of thought with the devastating effects of new technology. Holy wars, instead of consisting of ‘crusades’ on camel and with scimitar, instead constitute suicide bombings and genocide. Instead of embracing new technology, they work to undo its changing effects by destroying it with technology’s own weapons. The USSR

found this out firsthand in its war in Afghanistan. To some, this may seem a successful blend of tradition and technology; religious fanatics coupled with plastique explosive; the scimitar now a Semtex belt. “In the instructions found in a car of the hijackers in Boston’s Logan Airport, it is written: ‘If God grants any one of you a slaughter, you should perform it as an offering on behalf of your father and mother, for they are owed by you. If you slaughter, you should plunder those you slaughter, for that is a sanctioned custom of the Prophet’s,’” (Kaldor, 5). To most, however, this mix is utterly devastating in its unpredictable and treacherous nature.

The beginnings of the war between technology and tradition go much farther back than the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Dark Ages, caused by the destruction of Rome, formed a more powerful traditional world, in opposite of the technologically advanced Rome; with religion, stagnation, and filth going hand in hand. Galileo, famous astrologer and scientist, felt the wrath of the ongoing war between tradition and technology as the Church called his telescope, “A tool of the Devil.” The Traditional State eventually dishonored and blackmailed him, to avoid the change that science would bring about: their downfall. With the invention of the rifle, many countries petitioned to have it stricken from the battlefield. Why? Because the invincible Knights were no match to black powder, and the Knights’ role in Feudal society was critical. It gave unparalleled power to a civilian with little or no training; whereas a Knight spent his entire life in service and training to his King. More recently, all wars involving Israel are all ward of tradition and religion, mixed with the stunning power of technology. The bombing of the USS Kole, several African Embassies, and the World Trade Center are also victims of these “new wars that are very difficult to contain and very difficult to end.” (Kaldor, 5).

People naturally resist change in order to preserve a more stable, less stressful way of life. Old traditions help to ease the stress out of ones life; to increase predictability. Traditions

may be as simple as “Meatloaf on Tuesdays” or as complex as the Five Pillars of Islam. However, with the growing technological globalization, many feel their old traditions failing in light of new technology and change. Some wish to embrace the hope that innovation brings, while others shun the stress and work it demands, which creates conflict within society. This conflict may result in the extreme loss of property and life, or may be something as small as the stifling of new ideas. Old traditions force an old way of thought, limiting the scope of technology. Without change and technology; the power of Man’s mind; what good is Man? He has no other means to succeed in life, aside of his Mind. And to deny fact, logic, and innovation (through tradition or religion), is to deny Man life. Any mix of life and death is deadly and harmful.

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