

The Dark Side of Globalization

Sharp thinking about humanity's future

Books Reviewed by Mark Wegierski

Robert Kaplan's new book, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* is a collection of essays by a social observer, world traveler, and prolific commentator. Except for the last essay, they have previously appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and other publications, including the keynote piece, "The Coming Anarchy" (originally published in February 1994). In the book's introduction, Kaplan says of that article: "The concrete reality of the phenomenon it describes is undeniable: For every sixty-five dollars earned in rich countries, one dollar is earned in poor ones, and the gap is widening. That division is not only between North and South, but within countries and regions themselves, including the United States, where an upper-middle techno-class joins the global economy, while a vast realm of the citizenry has seen little rise in their salaries and owns no stocks or mutual funds." (p. xiii)

Kaplan's main outlook can be seen as that of realism and pessimism, recognizing the importance of limits and natural constraints on human possibilities. He writes that West Africa is becoming *the* symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real "strategic" danger. Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee

migrations, increasing erosion of national borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism. West Africa provides an appropriate introduction to the issues, often extremely unpleasant to discuss, that will soon confront our civilization... It is Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday, who is now the prophet of West Africa's future. And West Africa's future, eventually, will also be that of most of the rest of the world (pp. 7-9).

Kaplan rejects liberal utopianism, and particularly its stress on "democracy" as a proper response to these emerging mega-crises. Rather, he argues for so-called "hybrid" regimes that will be mostly authoritarian, while offering prosperity and security to their citizens. Indeed, he says that the U.S. itself may have to evolve into such a "hybrid" regime.

The last, very weighty essay in the collection, "The Dangers of Peace" (pp. 169-185), extensively cites Ortega y Gasset (but is also clearly based on Nietzsche's thought).

Its main theme is to point to the dangers of the oversatiated, consumerist mass-society. The ongoing struggle for a more ecological world is seen as a possible vehicle in advanced societies for avoiding the sated, banal "Last Man" existence: A world of natural limits, in which clean air and water and fecund soil were highly prized commodities, might impose a sense of warlike reality upon us, preventing us from becoming barbarian mass men, yet without requiring the citizenry to fight [in wars].

The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War
by Robert D. Kaplan
New York: Random House/
Vintage Books
198 pages, \$12.00 trade paperback



Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy
by Edward Luttwak
New York: HarperCollins Perennial
290 pages, \$15.00 trade paperback

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What we should be skeptical of are the “benefits” of a world at peace with unlimited natural resources. As Ortega y Gasset reminds us, “Nobility is synonymous with a life of effort” (p. 184). So — while it can sometimes have catastrophic dimensions in societies of the planet’s South — natural scarcity may be something that maintains our sense of humanity. Should an advanced society ever discover some virtually unlimited energy source, it might well eventually become extinct through hyper-decadence and enervation.

Kaplan’s embrace of realism and pessimism about the human condition, and his belief in natural limits, are clearly more truly conservative than the outlooks of most U.S. conservatives and neoconservatives, with their “international human rights” crusades, growth-mania, economism, and attacks on Third World family-planning programs. Kaplan well articulates a possible new synthesis of ideas centered on ecological, demographic, consumption-society, national-identity, and power-politics issues.

Edward Luttwak is an eclectic theorist extensively exploring the interrelationships between economic and social matters. His book (which originally appeared in 1998 in Great Britain) is, to a large extent, an indictment of the “turbo-capitalism” that is increasingly gripping the planet. He contrasts this with the “controlled capitalism” of the late 1940s to 1970s, which delivered unprecedented, almost universal, prosperity to the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. He argues that in each of those societies there were different mechanisms (such as regulation in the U.S.), for controlling the excesses of capitalism, while allowing societies to reap most of its benefits. Today, however, the U.S., U.K., Europe, and even Japan, are moving in the direction of “turbo-capitalism.”

According to Luttwak, the U.S., which is particularly advanced along this road, is characterized by increasing inequalities of wealth and income. For example, in 1994, the top five percent of households

received 21.2 percent of aggregate income, which is an increase from 16.8 percent in 1977. Aggregate income for the bottom twenty percent of the population had declined from 4.2 percent in 1977, to 3.6 percent in 1994;

and for the next twenty percent of the population from 10.2 percent in 1977 to 8.9 percent in 1994 (p. 89). There is a trend not only of comparatively greater poverty in lower socio-economic groups, but also of the shrinking of the broader middle classes, while the top one percent of the U.S. population becomes ever wealthier.

The corporate downsizing that was so popular in the 1990s has had extensive social costs. The reason for the low U.S. unemployment rates of the mid- to late-1990s, according to

Luttwak, is that wages had been driven down as the profile of the job market changed from relatively well-paying industrial and clerical jobs to poorly-paying service sector jobs, with a thin layer of well-paying high-tech jobs at the top. Many blue-collar workers had their lives devastated by being laid off from industrial plants, which virtually threw them onto the margins of society. At the same time, numerous mundane white-collar jobs (for example, in middle management) were eliminated, thus pushing middle class persons to a reduced status. Since comparatively overqualified persons were competing for borderline service sector jobs, the people in even lower socioeconomic categories were further marginalized and alienated. In the high-tech economy, the industrial plant jobs that almost any healthy, physically strong person could do continued to disappear. The Old Economy giants were laying workers off, but the New Economy giants needed only comparatively small numbers of employees, virtually all of whom had to have extensive, prestige education. So most of the new employment was actually in the ever-larger service sector. There were also such phenomena where, for example, clerical workers were laid off (losing all their benefits), and then hired as temporary workers, sometimes even by the same company.

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Continental Europe is at times very high by U.S. standards (e.g., around twelve percent), those societies offer certain compensations in return, for example, high wages, job security (for those workers who have jobs), extensive holidays for workers, a greater sense of social continuity and family stability, and so forth. Although Luttwak does not make this connection, it could be argued that a European-style welfare state is far easier to maintain in comparatively homogenous, low-immigration societies, where the feelings of common nationhood, kinship, and destiny make the economic impositions of the welfare state seem less onerous. There may indeed be a correlation between the most turbo-capitalist societies in the region (e.g., the U.K.) and high immigration.

Another alternative model to the U.S. is Japan, which has almost full employment, but very high prices for consumers, including various highly restrictive practices to block foreign imports. The Japanese are clearly willing to accept various economic costs for the sake of greater social cohesion and harmony. Luttwak perhaps underplays the importance of Japan's almost one hundred percent homogeneity and its deep cultural traditions of hard work, frugality, and self-sacrifice *for Japan*, in allowing Japanese society to maintain a full-employment ethos. Japan has achieved its economic miracle without mass immigration from abroad, nor is any likely to be allowed in the future.

Luttwak also does not devote enough attention to the role of immigration, legal and illegal, in exacerbating inequalities in America, although many of his points have an immigration dimension — for example, when he writes about “The Return of the Servants” (pp. 85-90) (wealthy households in the U.S. now being able to hire extensive domestic help). High levels of immigration increase employment pressure on almost all native-born Americans, including those from the most marginalized groups, who might have greater chances if the labor market were not being continually undercut.

Although Luttwak argues that turbo-capitalism and globalization are not entirely coterminous phenomena, this book could be given a place of honor alongside the many critiques of globalization of the last decade. •

Stop Mass Immigration Now

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, for the time period 1981-1999 there were 16,380,275 immigrants admitted into the United States. That is enough new people to build more than 163 new cities of 100,000 population. These numbers do not include the estimated 375,000 to 425,000 illegal immigrants who sneak in every year.

The INS reports that from 1925 to 1965 we accepted an average of 178,000 legal immigrants per year. During the decade of the 1990s we let in an average of 914,155 per year.

Our population in 1990 was 248,709,873. The 2000 census shows 281,275,000 — an increase of 33 million. Nearly two-thirds of our yearly population growth comes from new immigrants and their offspring.

Population projections from the U.S. Census Bureau call for our population to jump from today's 281 million to 300 million in 2081, and to reach 571 million in 2100. This high rate of growth is causing problems for our cities, schools, highways, national parks as well as the loss of prime farmland and fresh water.

This scenario doesn't have to happen. Congress has the power to change our immigration laws and slow our population growth. Every poll I have seen in newspapers and magazines shows that between 65 percent and 83 percent of those surveyed favor cutbacks in immigration to about 200,000 per year.

Let's restore some of the limits and guidelines that once insured that immigration could help rather than overwhelm America. There are several bills before Congress at this time to deal with immigration policy. If you are concerned, contact your congress-member today.

We don't need mass immigration. Get involved before it's too late.

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