

ABOUT THE *WORLD VIEWS* PAMPHLET SERIES

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the Soviet Union was dismantled in 1991, Cold War geopolitics ended. In the 1990s, while the European Economic Community was being transformed into the European Union reincorporating substantial parts of Eastern Europe, the North American Free Trade Agreement created new bonds between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Asia and North America were linked by unprecedentedly large flows of trade.

Computers had already launched the Information Age. In the last half of the 1990s, use of the Internet spread rapidly. Stock exchanges became electronic. Huge financial transactions could zip around the world in nanoseconds. Business corporations globalized in new ways. The macroeconomies of advanced industrial countries became more interdependent. Job structures and familiar patterns of living changed.

While probes were sent into other planets of the solar system, powerful telescopes brought new revelations about the awesome ferment of the universe and beyond. Genetic engineering, cloning, and the possibility of protein-based computers promised a startlingly new biological 21st century.

Meanwhile, immigration, refugee flows, and increased travel commingled people of different cultural backgrounds. Old ways of anchoring personal identity and of interpreting life's meanings were threatened. Sometimes the reaction to future shock and to technology-enabled cultural "imperialism" was a return to religious fundamentalism. In several parts of the globe, people sought the comfort of familiar moorings by reasserting ethnic pride. Broader bonds of polity and civilization dissolved in favor of ethnic fragmentation.

In the pamphlet series, **World Views**, distinguished scholars from various parts of the world analyze the impact of such changes from their own perspectives, using their own terminologies. Sometimes, this involves a reevaluation of related changes whenever they occurred in the whole span of humanity's past.

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