Trends. Self, Security, and the Twenty-First Century

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Many social observers are suggesting that our era of globalization and an ever-greater access to convenient, efficient, comprehensive, and quick telecommunications are incontrovertibly facilitating the construction of a new homogeneous self. These observers suggest that people throughout the world are becoming more and more alike as to beliefs, opinions, and attitudes—ultimately to the very content, structure, function, and process of the self. As this continues to occur, we truly are becoming the world, a global community, a family that through a sense of kinship can finally jettison violent means of conflict resolution for consultation, negotiation, and peaceful resolution of remaining differences. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this hypothesis of a psychological and soporific McDonaldization.

Phenomena such as a growing number of ethnocentric, nationalistic, and civil wars, the fragmentation of nation-states, and serial, mass, and seemingly arbitrary murder suggest that for many in today's world the 20th century self is under attack. It may be fighting back through an insistence on ever-finer distinctions of heterogeneity. In psychological terms, the it may be rendering self-other boundaries ever more impermeable, as opposed to allowing such boundaries to approach an extreme permeability bearing on nonexistence. In-groups and out-groups may be increasingly constructed beyond the constraints of physical geography via cyberspace yielding an ever-increasing chaotic patchwork of psychological turfs.