

Tipping Point Commentaries

Zogby's "The Way We'll Be"

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Thanks to Today's Global Youth, a Rosy Tomorrow?

By JANET MASLIN

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Mr. Zogby renames the Greatest, Baby Boom, X and Millennial Generations and places great hope in this last group, which he calls *First Globals*. (The others are called *Private*, *Woodstock* and *Nike* here.) He believes that *First Globals* see what the other groups do not, and that their lives are public and interconnected in ways that were not possible in pre-Internet times. To hear him tell it, this group will usher in a new era of sanity, substance and citizenship. But his main point about the *Globals* is more down to earth because "The Way We'll Be" is as much a sales tool as a sociological study. "If you can't market successfully to this amazing crew," he warns businesses about *First Global* customers, "find another line of work."

There is certainly more material to mine from Mr. Zogby's book, but for this short monograph we will confine ourselves to this overview offered in quote above.

As I am, myself, from what Zogby describes as the *Woodstock* generation (something I would normally shy from accepting), there appears to be a gulf between this generation and the *Globals*. And then again, perhaps not – on an individual level insofar as some of my generation's children are *Globals*, while others are *Nikes*. This, then reduces the gulf to a rift.

However, returning not to the generations but rather what demarks the current one, the complete work reveals that the *Globals* aggregate into groups along new lines. It is as if the term that my generation would use, Balkanization, ceases to be of use because it signifies a vast reach, even if the physical borders of those states are minuscule in themselves. The Balkans denote an east-west dichotomy that is a relic of the cold war struggle of titans played through surrogates. Instead, as revealed in the metaphor employed in the larger work, tectonics are shifting and their fault lines trace between those who shop at Target and those who shop at Wal-Mart. The political lines are fading from blues and reds to re-align away from 9-11 and more towards Hurricane Katrina.

The author of the article cited above has doubts about Mr. Zogby's future view. The optimism is too wild and Maslin barely contains blurting out Pollyanna. This is, perhaps, the problem of viewing Mr. Zogby through a stovepipe. When I asked him about how the accuracies of his polls paled in comparison to the Iowa political futures market, he offered that his interest was not so much in forecasting the future as he was interested in the motivations and alignments of populations along questions of the moment.

The tipping point here will not be found in who gets elected, but who votes for them and why.