

should be three important targets of U.S. aid. They are unlikely to receive it if the U.S. remains fixed on Russia. The Clinton administration needs to understand that the empire is gone and that strategic relationships have been irrevocably changed. Aid and support should flow naturally in accordance with new strategic realities. •

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A New World and the Tribes that Fuel It

By Martin Sieff

Occasionally a book comes along that is so fresh, so brilliant and so convincingly argued that it changes one's way of looking at the world. Joel Kotkin's *Tribes: How Race, Religion and Family Determine Success in the New Global Economy* (Random House) is that kind of book.

Kotkin, a fellow at the Center for the New West in Denver, has produced a

book that will make the high priests of political correctness and quota politics throw up their hands in horror.

Kotkin argues that one of the most important generators of economic growth in the world is the activity of a small number of highly educated "global tribes" — the Jews, the Japanese, the offshore Chinese, the offshore Indians and others — who have strong ethnic, cultural and usually religious identities.

Their cultural values teach them pragmatism, economic adaptability and readiness to move from country to country, even from continent to continent, in search of economic opportunity. They are, Kotkin argues, the yeast in the bread of the global economy, the catalyst peoples who make the chemistry of economic success work. And their importance in the new global economy, with its emphasis on high-tech information flow, is greater than ever.

This kind of talk is political dynamite. Historically, liberals have avoided such arguments for fear of appearing racist. Conservatives are content to argue that such minority groups be given a chance to contribute in society. Both sides tend to share silently the comfortable assumption that the American melting pot both can and should absorb such groups after a couple of generations or so.

Such minority groups, often traumatized by repeated persecutions precisely because of their economic achievements, also have tried to deny their own separateness. Many such groups hold to what Jewish scholar Reuben Kimmelman calls the equation that invisibility equals safety: The more visibility in a society that an individual and his relatives receive, the more likely he will be targeted for a pogrom.

Kotkin turns all these assumptions on their head. The secret of the success of these groups, he says, is in their distinctiveness. The clannishness they are often accused of really exists and is an essential ingredient of their success. Far from condemning such characteristics, we should welcome them. Societies as a whole can flourish only when they succeed in attracting such groups.

Some of Kotkin's choices as tribes will surprise his readers. The most powerful and successful international tribe of all, he convincingly argues, is

the British. Far from shriveling into obscurity with the decline and fall of their empire, the British mercantile classes have exhibited a renewed vitality since being freed of their burden.

This has been the case especially since Margaret Thatcher took power as prime minister in 1979. During the 11 years of her premiership, British overseas investment soared to levels not seen since 1914.

Britain is now the biggest foreign investor in the United States, far outstripping its two nearest rivals, the Netherlands and Japan. The British and their North American offspring continue to control by far the largest accumulation of foreign investment and most of the largest corporations in the world, Kotkin says.

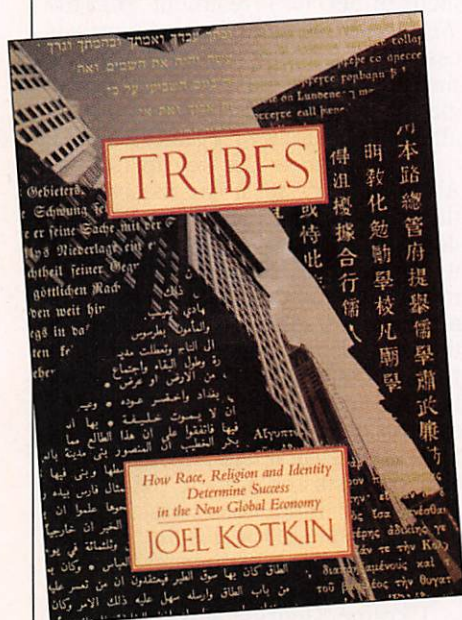
Kotkin's recipe for success and prosperity for the United States — indeed, for any nation — is to create the conditions for a "global metropolis" such as New York or London, where the major trade of the world is concentrated. In such places, tribes can enjoy the economic freedom to create wealth, a tolerant, pluralistic culture, and public polity to maintain their traditions.

In one of his most fascinating chapters, Kotkin targets the up-and-coming global tribes of economic overachievers, and his picks are fascinating: the Armenians, the overseas Palestinians and the Mormons, whom he follows literary critic Harold Bloom in tapping as most likely to constitute the next world religion.

There are frustrating gaps in this book, however. While the economic tribes of the Northern Hemisphere receive comprehensive treatment, Latin America and Africa are virtually ignored. One would have liked some discussion of the impact on South America of the flight of capital from Argentina, or of the role of the Ibo, often called the "Jews of West Africa" — a classic tribe of persecuted economic overachievers if ever there was one.

But you can't have everything. *Tribes* is essential to understanding the kind of values that really make our global economy work. Entertaining and wise, it distills many of the achiever cultures' hard-learned lessons for success. •

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Fair Comment

current Russian Parliament, with or without President Boris Yeltsin, to apply effectively any new aid, or in the ability of the Clinton administration to penetrate the Russian bureaucracy to hit its aid targets.

Like the Soviet Union, Russia has in reality already broken up into a number of regional, territorial and ethnic configurations beyond Moscow's control or ability to retrieve. An independent or autonomous Siberia looms on the horizon, with its vast storehouse of natural resources and wealth. Tatarstan on the Middle Volga and Eastern Siberia's republics of Tuva, Sakha and Khakasiya have served notice that they will remain part of the Russian Federation only if granted substantial economic and political autonomy. Chechnia in the North Caucasus declared full independence from Russia, and other North Caucasian nations are likely to do likewise or combine to form a distinctly anti-Russian confederation. Financial aid to Russia will not retard this process — indeed, it may accelerate it — because the underlying reasons are more political than economic. The prospect of Russia reverting to its 16th century borders is real. Russia might then be reformed as a loose federation in which the clearly defined regions could pursue their own interests and develop their economies independently of Moscow. That is probably the best that can be hoped for — but the outside world can do little to encourage such a recovery at this stage.

Washington cannot stop this process. Indeed, Clinton's proposals will accelerate it by economically empowering local entities and individuals, who will strengthen their efforts to escape Moscow's stultifying grasp. Still, the United States has good opportunities to strengthen its strategic interest in the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the "should we help Russia" debate once again mistakes everything remaining from the former Soviet Union as Russia or Russian, thus obscuring a number of policy choices that could enhance the U.S. strategic position even as Russia comes apart.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, American policymakers have paid scant attention to the opportunities that the emerging non-Russian states offer America to advance its global and regional interests, while safeguarding against a Russia that falls apart violently or attempts to grow

larger as it convulses. The existence of economically strong and stable countries on Russia's periphery would impede the reconsolidation of a new empire under Russian domination — an undisguised objective of much of the communist old guard and Russian nationalists. Moreover, such countries could offer attractive democratic and free market models to many moderate Russians seeking alternatives to the current Russian chaos.

Important economic and political realignments in the former Soviet bor-

derlands are under way, and in most cases they should be supported. Where once Moscow was the center of their economic and political universe, Ukrainians, Belarussians and Moldovans now belong to Eastern Europe. The Baltic States are gravitating naturally toward Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Transcaucasus have opened a range of promising new relations in the Black

Sea region, including Turkey, and in Iran and Israel. Central Asians look to their Turkic kin for assistance, but also to Pakistan, South Korea and Japan.

In every case, the leaders of these new states accept U.S. influence in the form of financial assistance and political support. In almost all cases, the United States provides token support, but only after U.S. policymakers have satisfied some arbitrary calculation of support due Russia. In the aid game, the Soviet empire still exists.

The Clinton administration needs to think independently on this issue. It would begin by disaggregating the new non-Russian states from the concept of "Russia." The administration should direct aid selectively to some of the new non-Russian states because it is in our interests to do so, regardless of what happens to Russia — or perhaps because of what is happening to it.

Ukraine, with the largest territory and fourth-largest population in Europe and the third-largest nuclear armory in the world, provides the most

obvious example of a Western foreign policy concern in its own right. Many Ukrainians believe U.S. interest stops with the nuclear issue. A leading Ukrainian political figure told me several months ago: "The U.S. is interested only in the fate of our nuclear weapons. It has no interest in the fate of our nation." Unfortunately, Clinton once again reinforced the exclusive link between nuclear arms and U.S. interests in his speech to the newspaper editors.

The Republic of Georgia, led by Ed-

uard Shevardnadze, the only post-Soviet leader of world stature, is another deserving case. Georgia is at the center of a region of complex political, religious and ethnic relationships. It has good relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan and could conceivably assist in a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The leadership in Georgia works constructively with both Iran and Israel. Georgia is potentially a leader of

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the consortium of states brought together by the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Agreement and a logical focus of private investment from the West. A strong and vibrant Georgia is essential for stability in a region where the United States has important strategic interests. It represents an unparalleled opportunity for American aid.

Uzbekistan is the key to Central Asian stability. Yet it has received little except opprobrium from Western democrats for its slowness in shedding its Soviet ways. President Islam Karimov is no saint, but he is a transitional figure, like so many of the leaders of the new states, and he has persistently sought to increase Western influence in his country. In a long meeting last spring, he told me that the United States will wish it had paid less attention to Russia and more to Uzbekistan when other influences burst into the open. He pointed specifically to the Islamic militancy affecting neighboring Tajikistan.

Ukraine, Georgia and Uzbekistan