

**THE FUNCTION, SIGNIFICANCE AND LIMITATIONS OF  
'GLOBALISATION' IN THE NEW LABOUR DISCOURSE**

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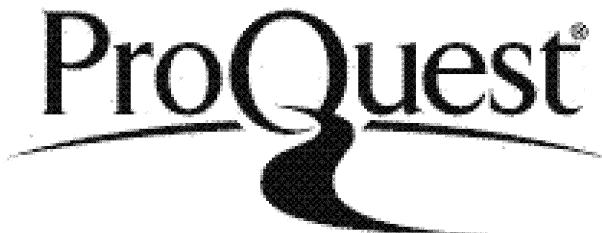
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## **Abstract**

This thesis critically examines the idea of 'globalisation' in the New Labour discourse over the period 1996- 2001, challenging the version articulated by key members of the party. This task involves contesting and reinterpreting the implications imputed to the process both at the domestic and international levels. The understanding and implications of 'globalisation' have changed over time. I therefore distinguish two phases. The first phase I associate exclusively with Tony Blair. This understanding focuses on the domestic significance of globalisation, and conflates the process with liberalisation. In this phase globalisation functions to de-politicise a 'third way' agenda, which is presented as if it were the only logical alternative for a party of the centre left. A second phase, the chief contributors to which are Tony Blair and Robin Cook, concentrates on the international significance of globalisation. Both argue for a move beyond traditional realist approaches to foreign policy, stressing instead the role globalisation plays in creating a 'global interest'. Drawing upon developments in the literature, the thesis challenges the New Labour position firstly by questioning the implications of globalisation drawn out by them, as empirically untenable. Globalisation does not necessarily limit the room for manoeuvre in the way suggested by Blair, nor does it imply an increased harmony of interests forming around the idea of a global interest. However, in offering an alternative interpretation this study highlights that globalisation should not merely be understood in terms of whether its usage is right or wrong. In addition, the thesis argues for a critical hermeneutic approach to be taken on the topic. It is argued that the current form globalisation takes is reproduced because it functions in particular contexts to serve a political agenda within the party. This reveals an ideological dimension in the discourse, drawing attention to the ways in which the meaning of globalisation is manipulated in order to serve an alternative set of interests not declared in the discourse itself, thereby manifesting itself in a particular form over time.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*“The political debate today, is shaped as much by how a country sees its place in the world as by internal ideological debate”.*<sup>1</sup>

*“Globalization should not be seen as ineluctable... often, it serves as a fallacious pretext for harmful, disastrous policies...[so] fatalism must give way to will”.*<sup>2</sup>

This thesis critically examines the idea of ‘globalisation’ in the New Labour discourse over the period 1996-2001, challenging the version articulated by key members of the party. In this chapter, I outline the orientation of the argument, and introduce some of the key ideas that structure it. I begin by discussing why such a study is necessary, locating the discussion of globalisation in the context of the 1997 general election. I then outline the manner in which I approach the analysis of globalisation, before going on to qualify its nature and focus, drawing attention to some of the limitations inherent in the approach.

### New Labour and Globalisation.

Much has changed since that fateful night in May 1997 when New Labour was emphatically swept into power. The day after the election, Blair’s new government sat

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’, speech to the Club of Chicago, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999.

on a one hundred and seventy eight majority. The Conservatives had lost 178 seats and Labour had gained 145, with the swing from Conservative to Labour of 10.3%, a post-war record.<sup>3</sup> The Conservatives seemed to be at an impasse, stricken by internal squabbles and bedevilled by charges of corruption, their ideas no longer appeared to have their original innovative or revolutionary quality. Thus, whereas during the eighteen years of Conservative rule it had seemed that Labour might never again govern, by 2000, similar doubts were being aired about the Conservatives.<sup>4</sup>

However, though victory was emphatic, it would be wrong to conclude that all was well. Days had barely passed before some began to voice disquiet. There concern: had New Labour perhaps offered up too much, or perhaps too little, in their hunger for power?<sup>5</sup> Such a concern overlaid a deeper worry: had New Labour sold out in order to secure victory? Had the Financial Times got it right when they suggested that 'Labour sets out to make similar look different'?<sup>6</sup> Was the party in fact 'labouring under false pretences'?<sup>7</sup>

Blair was certainly sure of his case, and not about to forget whom the electorate had voted in. Following a bitter process of internal party changes, Blair and his inner circle

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<sup>2</sup> Final text of the National Convention on Mondialisation, Europe, France, in *Vedredi*, No. 276. Quoted in Ben Clift, 'Labour's Third Way and European Social Democracy', in Steve Ludlum and Martin J. Smith (eds.), *New Labour in Government*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2001), p.63.

<sup>3</sup> D. Denver, 'The Results: How Britain Voted', in Andrew Geddes and Jonathon Tonge, (eds.), *Labour's Landslide: The British General Election*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.9.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony King, (ed.), *Britain at the Polls*, (London: Chatham House, 1992). Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell & John Curtis, (eds.), *Labour's Last Chance? The 1992 Election and Beyond*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Polly Toynbee, *Did Things Get Better?* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Financial Times, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Colin Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour: Labouring Under False Pretences?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

saw their victory as a triumph for a process of modernisation begun by Neil Kinnock in the 1980's, and as a mandate to pursue a policy agenda considerably different to days gone by.<sup>8</sup> Thus, 'Old Labour' was definitely out. As he was to reiterate countless times following the election 'we won as New Labour and we will govern as New Labour'. And yet there is a certain irony here, in that such a resounding victory in favour of a government so enamoured of the idea of change should nonetheless find that they are criticised by so many for their reluctance to break free of the conservative legacy.

In the first instance, Blair answers many of his detractors on this point, by locating New Labour in a period that is presented as being genuinely new. The demise of the Cold War, ever-greater levels of economic integration and unprecedented technological advances all combine to explain the new times, and thereby justify New Labour's position. And centrally, the process understood to be driving this change is the process of globalisation. Hence this thesis.

Whether business, political, or cultural (or academic), no self-respecting guru has missed the opportunity to wax lyrical on the subject, and New Labour, like so many, have not been immune from being caught up in this wave. In fact the idea of globalisation actually underpins the approach of New Labour. New Labour wards off criticism because, they say, new times require new approaches, and this applies no less to a party of the left. We live in an age of 'globalisation'. And as Blair is keen to point out, "no

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<sup>8</sup> Jon Sopel, Tony Blair: The Moderniser, (London: Michael Joseph, 1995). On the process of modernization see Stephen Driver & Luke Martell, New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

country is immune from the massive change that globalisation brings".<sup>9</sup> So significant is globalisation that it is now possible to credibly talk of a 'third way' position in British politics.

The question therefore, is what of these new times, and what status do we afford their analysis? What is this thing, 'globalisation'? In the following chapters I will examine the function, significance and limitations of 'globalisation' in the New Labour understanding over time, and in challenging the interpretation contained in the New Labour discourse, offer an assessment that attaches a new significance to 'globalisation', one that draws attention to the ideological and constitutive role that it plays in the New Labour discourse.

The argument will take the following form. In interpreting ideology in the New Labour discourse, I distinguish between two phases, roughly coinciding with the timing of speeches on the topic, and more importantly, coinciding with what might be regarded as a shifting set of interests. The first period, from around 1996 through to the end of 1999, is on the whole dominated by the ideas of Blair, who makes sense of the implications of globalisation judged in terms of the domestic impact that it is perceived to have. A second period, though overlapping, generally develops from 1999 onwards, and concerns itself with thinking about globalisation judged against that backcloth of the international realm and its consequences for foreign policy. In addition to Blair, contributors to this second phase include notably Robin Cook and Clare Short. In the

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<sup>9</sup> Tony Blair, 'Facing the Modern Challenge: The Third Way in Britain and South Africa', speech at the Old Assembly Dining Room, Parliament Building, Cape Town, South Africa, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1999.

final section of the thesis, I trace how an altered understanding of globalisation posited by the non-governmental sector and new social movements has also played an important role, in effect challenging the New Labour understanding in both areas. In this respect one might qualify this development as potentially harbouring the demise of the term as a significant feature of the New Labour corpus, and depending on the direction that this debate takes, as ultimately representing a challenge to the entire project. The reaction to this challenge will draw me to an examination of the response of Clare Short, Gordon Brown and Robin Cook.

I now turn to what I mean by the function, significance and limitations of 'globalisation', and the means by which an evaluation can and ought to be made.

#### Thinking about the Consequences of Globalisation

For New Labour "certain key consequences flow from accepting globalisation and working with it".<sup>10</sup> This is what I refer to as 'the function of globalisation' in the New Labour discourse, that is the significance as accorded by New Labour. Such a view relates to how globalisation operates as *explanans*, in other words 'that doing the explaining'. This involves an examination of how it is conceptualised and how it is used to validate action in the political realm.

Undoubtedly, 'globalisation' has an important function to play in the New Labour discourse. As an idea it has captured the imagination of the New Labour 'top brass', and particularly Blair. The New Labour intellectual corpus contains frequent references to

the subject, stressing its significance and profundity as witnessed by the challenge that it represents. Of course, New Labour is not alone in treating the topic seriously. Like so many other western mainstream parties, it is ‘globalisation’ that is seen to harbour ‘new times’. However, what is perhaps unique about New Labour discourse is the way in which globalisation functions in validating a new political philosophy.<sup>11</sup> According to Blair, “[t]he driving force behind the Third Way is globalisation”.<sup>12</sup> And yet it is by no means clear just what ‘Third Way’ politics is. As Wickham-Jones points out, “[t]he term itself is frustratingly elliptical and vague”; being used “in different contexts with different meanings”.<sup>13</sup> So it is with globalisation.

And globalisation does not just function as the ‘driving force behind the Third Way’. It is also important to recognise the sense in which it is significant as a result of its evocative and populist nature. As will become clear, this fits well with the Blairite desire for modernisation and radical change. Its widespread currency lends a populist connotation to the broader New Labour programme. Blair is keen to tap into this, as it holds out the opportunity of a transformed and improved future. Thus talk of ‘new times’ is made all the more palatable given the wider context of ‘global speak’.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, speech to the Keindanren, Tokyo, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1996.

<sup>11</sup> See Noreena Hertz, The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy, (London: William Heinemann, 2001), p.31.

<sup>12</sup> Blair, ‘Facing the Modern Challenge’, op.cit. See also Anthony Giddens, The Third Way, (Oxford, Polity Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Mark Wickham-Jones, ‘Labour’s Trajectory in Foreign Affairs: The Moral Crusade of a Pivotal Power’, in Richard Little & Mark Wickham-Jones (eds.), New Labour’s Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.14.

<sup>14</sup> What Susan Strange refers to as ‘globaloney’.

However, and as will be examined in chapter 4, globalisation also has more specific consequences. Blair argues that in light of globalisation, “the key issue facing all governments of developed nations is how to *respond*”.<sup>15</sup> This highlights how policy is re-prioritised, and reoriented along particular lines. ‘Globalisation’ determines an agenda that, first and foremost, *compels* a set of responses that are presented as unavoidable. Hence the political program is presented as if its prescriptions are unavoidable ‘necessities’ associated with the ‘new times’. The programme, as a result, takes on the status of being pragmatic. Such a stance allows New Labour to posit a move “beyond the old boundaries between left and right altogether,” which by their nature are now seen as being ‘dogmatic’, ‘ideological’ and ‘conservative’.<sup>16</sup> In place of the ‘old left’ and ‘new right’ positions, the New Labour orientation is instead ‘progressive’, because it *embraces* a new agenda that derives from the new times.

The consequences of this new setting then are far reaching, in that this relocation holds out the opportunity of ‘de-politicising’ politics. ‘Ideology’, in an age of globalisation, becomes a thing of the past: “[t]he era of grand ideologies... is over”.<sup>17</sup> Emptied of ideological content, with its policies now seen as unavoidable, domestic politics are pursued in the ‘national interest’, and given meaning vis-à-vis the world ‘out there’. Politics thus becomes increasingly technocratic, “what matters is what works”; there no

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<sup>15</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, in Tony Blair, *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1996), p.118, emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> Tony Blair, speech to the News Corporation Leadership Conference, Hayman Island, Australia. 17<sup>th</sup> July 1995. Quoted in Hertz, *The Silent Takeover*, op.cit., pp28-29.

<sup>17</sup> Tony Blair ‘Security in a World of Change: The New Politics of the Left’, in Blair, *New Britain*, op.cit., p.213.

longer being any “right or left politics in economic management today”.<sup>18</sup> Previous controversies are apparently resolved and antagonistic themes now reconciled.

The function and significance of globalisation extends beyond the domestic realm. As will be examined in chapter five, globalisation is also significant for New Labour because it presents a set of experiences that are *universal* in content. This in effect challenges the problematic of ‘incommensurability’; the idea that different points of view ultimately preclude the possibility of agreement on certain issues.<sup>19</sup> For New Labour, globalisation gives rise to a collective experience, which in turn spurs a logic that *encourages* an evolving consensus on issues traditionally seen as antagonistic. It encourages the possibility of a consensus developing, and validates a particular dialogue as universal, thanks to the objective conditions brought about by globalisation. Not seen as either divisive or dialectical (i.e. at once unifying and divisive), globalisation is rather a process that opens the way for a hitherto nascent set of universal values and interests to develop. Thus in addition to a third way in domestic politics, globalisation also gives rise to the possibility, indeed the need, for a ‘third way’ in international affairs; in this case suggesting a move beyond ‘idealist’ and ‘realist’ positions.

So what does all this imply for foreign policy? To begin with, on this view, the national interest and ‘global interest’ increasingly becomes one and the same thing. This means that the active pursuit of certain values and interests in the international arena becomes less controversial, in fact allowing New Labour to articulate an agenda in foreign affairs

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<sup>18</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Third Way’, speech given to the French Assembly, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1998.

that can be described as ‘solidarist’ in orientation.<sup>20</sup> That is to say, the active realisation of issues of global justice must now be pursued in the national interest if international order is to be secured in the long term.

Given the ‘world as it is’, increasingly unified in the face of the challenge and opportunity globalisation presents, New Labour details a foreign policy that confidently places the active pursuit of ‘British values’ – now posited as ‘global values’ – at its heart. This is the sense in which New Labour are able to articulate and validate its much vaunted ‘ethical dimension’, a dimension that, according to Cook, does not significantly compromise other issues deemed to be in the national interest. Respect for human rights, for example, becomes a *sin qua non* of success in a global economy. The need to qualify the norm of non-intervention becomes increasingly necessary and yet, given greater interconnectedness, is also now less problematic, thanks to a set of universal values.

By pursuing a policy of ‘critical engagement’, one that encourages dialogue with all regimes, the British national interest can therefore be maximised, and aided by the possibility of exploiting its ‘pivotal’ status, Britain moreover, can have a significant hand in realising this shared destiny.

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<sup>19</sup>See Mark A. Neufeld, The Restructuring of International Relations Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

### Limitations of the Understanding: Globalisation as a Contested Term

Though we see that it plays an important function in the discourse, in evoking globalisation, New Labour nevertheless court considerable controversy. A key limitation, it will be seen, is that Blair and others have in effect articulated an account of dubious worth and questionable staying power; particularly given the increasingly negative connotations associated with globalisation by a wide variety of 'civil society groups' united under the catchall term 'anti-globalisation'.<sup>21</sup>

At first sight, it is quite surprising that New Labour should lend such credence to the idea 'globalisation', when a cursory examination of the literature quickly attunes one to the fact that it is a highly contested and indeed emotive issue. Nonetheless, in that they do opt for the term as a key *explanans*, an important part of this thesis will concern itself with some of the empirical and theoretical limitations to their understanding.

For some time now, a debate about the status of 'globalisation' has been unfolding in which writers have increasingly questioned many of the assumptions attending to the concept. In order to utilise this debate, and so make sense of the concept of globalisation itself, I conduct a critical examination of the globalisation 'literature' in chapter 3. On the basis of this examination, I argue that the position staked out by New Labour is in the first instance untenable, in that it draws heavily upon a conceptualisation of globalisation that has now largely been shown to be erroneous.

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<sup>20</sup> Hedley Bull, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society', in Herbert Butterfield & Martin Wight (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp35-50.

<sup>21</sup> This will be examined in chapter seven.

This conceptualisation relates to what I refer to as the ‘strong thesis’. Constituting a ‘first wave’ of thinking on the topic, the ‘strong thesis’ contains a series of assumptions that have subsequently been shown to be unsupportable. Essentially, this thesis holds out that there now exists a ‘global economy’, entailing a ‘global logic’ that assumes an increasingly circumscribed agenda for any government. Though of course containing elements of truth, the general thrust of the argument, I suggest, is overly simplistic because it fails to recognise the considerable room for manoeuvre that governments still retain. I argue that this view of globalisation, though still influential, mistakenly conflates ‘globalisation’ for ‘liberalisation’.<sup>22</sup>

To develop this part of the argument, I draw upon the ‘sceptical’ critique of globalisation posited by a number of prominent writers on the ‘left’.<sup>23</sup> This ‘second wave’ response to the initial understandings of globalisation can be seen as a challenge to the ‘strong thesis’, and as such, their approach presents a challenge to many of the assumptions about globalisation made by New Labour.

‘Sceptics’ such as Hirst and Thompson, begin by debunking an understanding of globalisation that they believe has solidified into a sort of ‘common sense’. In this respect, the critique is important in that it challenges what might be referred to as a

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<sup>22</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, Globalization: A Critical Introduction, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance, second edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

‘hegemonic view’.<sup>24</sup> In challenging this understanding, the sceptical critique questions what globalisation is, or must be, by offering a conceptualisation of the process in the abstract, thereby distinguishing it from other processes. This allows them to then apply an empirical means of judgement.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly for my own purposes, the sceptical literature questions the idea that globalisation entails certain consequences. In challenging the idea of a ‘global logic’ unfolding out of the process of globalisation, the sceptical literature dismisses the assumption that a particular set of policy responses must accompany the process. As such the sceptical approach rejects the idea that these measures are unavoidable and inevitable. Such a position is seen to be untenable, in that it is founded upon empirically suspect information, and it should be said, sustained by a neo-liberal outlook that need not be accepted.

It is possible to identify just such a ‘global logic’ operating in the New Labour discourse. Talk of an inevitable and unavoidable policy programme in response to globalisation constitutes a key tenet of the New Labour position. Either one accepts the ‘inevitable’ or suffer the consequences. Animated by a neo-liberal orientation, this global logic subsequently provides a strong justification on the part of New Labour for adhering to this circumscribed policy agenda. Therefore, in questioning any ‘logic’, at

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<sup>24</sup> See Stephen Gill, ‘Globalisation, Market Civilisation and Disciplinary Neo-Liberalism’, in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1995, p.403.

<sup>25</sup> For example, such empirical indicators as the level of Foreign Direct Investment, the size and number of ‘multi-national’ or ‘trans-national’ companies, and the degree of factor price equalisation.

least in the form to be found in the strong thesis, the sceptics provide an important counter argument, that can also be read as a challenge to the New Labour adumbration.<sup>26</sup>

However, and additionally, the sceptical approach is also significant in that it suggests that there is more to the problems of the initial understanding than just empirically untenable assumptions. The sceptical response also draws attention to what it sees as being a series of ‘myths’ surrounding this approach, in effect recognising that there is a sense in which ‘the idea of globalisation’ has an important independent role to play in any analysis. This highlights the need for a more ‘self reflexive’ approach to be taken towards the topic, drawing attention to the importance of thinking about how one ought to go about understanding globalisation. Importantly, the sceptical approach opens the way for thinking about globalisation, not just as a ‘thing-in-itself’, but also as a *discourse*. Such an insight has important consequences for thinking about New Labour.

Focusing predominantly on the consequences of globalisation, and the appropriate admixture of responses, rather than ‘globalisation’ itself, New Labour have in fact maintained a rather fuzzy and under-theorised understanding of globalisation, generally conflating globalisation with ‘liberalisation’. This view erroneously considers globalisation as existing ‘out there’ as it were. The problem with such a conceptualisation is that it fails to recognise the importance of ‘the idea of globalisation’

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<sup>26</sup> I also examine alternative ‘second wave’ approaches to ‘globalisation’ that highlight some inadequacies to the sceptical approach itself. Nonetheless, I maintain that the nature of these subsequent criticisms are such that they do not call into question the validity of the sceptical critique vis-à-vis the New Labour position.

as a *constitutive* feature, and the role that this plays in sustaining and reproducing a particular set of processes over time.

This last point, involves developing my critique of globalisation at a more abstract level. Based on certain hermeneutic postulates outlined in chapter 2, I argue that the New Labour approach to the topic is also untenable because it commits certain positivist 'fallacies'. By this I mean that their approach makes an erroneous distinction between the object of study, in this case globalisation, and the subject operating on the basis of this understanding. The nature of this distinction is such that it precludes any recognition of the constitutive role played by the subject. In failing to recognise this dimension 'globalisation' is understood as if it were a 'process-without-a-subject'. This is a mistake. As Blair himself recognises (though in a different context), "how a country sees its place in the world" is paramount.<sup>27</sup>

This approach - based on a particular ontological position concerning the nature of the social realm as partly constituted by the interpretation held by social actors - forms a key element for this thesis. Not only does it provide a means of assessment concerning the limitations of any account of what globalisation is, or can be, but it also provides an important insight about the nature and significance of 'meaning' and 'power' that is relevant to an examination of the role globalisation plays in the New Labour discourse.

### Re-interpreting the Significance of Globalisation.

New Labour's vague and imprecise interpretation of globalisation might seem surprising given the significance and function that it is accorded in underpinning so much of the New Labour approach. This all the more so, considering that the 'debate' surrounding the nature and significance of globalisation has itself become increasingly complex and controversial. Why should New Labour persist with a reading that is *contrary* to the sceptical reading of globalisation, and instead hold to a view that tends to obscure the complex nature of contemporary change?

A key argument made in the thesis is that one should not be at all surprised. Globalisation, I argue, is accorded such a central significance because of its tendency to obscure, and thanks to its 'fuzzy' nature. In this respect, I posit that an alternative interpretation of globalisation can be validated in the context of the New Labour discourse, referring to the 'real significance' of globalisation. This connotes an 'ideological' dimension to the discourse, in that it can be argued that the meaning of globalisation is in fact manipulated in order to serve certain 'masked' interests. These alternative interests I explain in terms New Labour's concern for 'electoral expediency', and latterly their concern to articulate a moral purpose to foreign policy whilst still acting in accordance with the 'national interest'.

In drawing attention to the 'idea of globalisation', and the constitutive role it has to play, I draw attention to the importance of 'reification'; how globalisation is made real as a result of people assuming that it is real and acting accordingly. 'Reification' in this

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<sup>27</sup> Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', op.cit.

context refers to how globalisation is “established and sustained” by being represented as if it were “permanent, natural and outside of time”.<sup>28</sup> In alluding to the process of ‘reification’, I draw attention to one way in which globalisation might be thought as operating ‘ideologically’. Though globalisation is often considered to be in some way ideological, what is often not clear is the validity (or even sense) of making such a statement. Hence, in order to validate the position of this thesis, I build on the initial tenets of the hermeneutic orientation in order to develop a particular conception of ideology.

Of course, to dub something as being ‘ideological’ is to enter into a difficult and contested terrain since it is a concept no less problematic than globalisation. Often dismissed as untenable, it is nonetheless a concept that I shall argue has continued validity. It remains a useful and valid critical tool of analysis, provided that it is formulated along particular lines, one that defines ideology as “meaning in the service of power”.<sup>29</sup>

In chapter 2 I examine this particular conception, which will involve an examination of the work of John Thompson, since it is he, I argue, who most thoroughly develops this position. I locate his work in terms of the various controversies surrounding the meaning of ideology, in order to draw out the strengths (and weaknesses) of this approach. The strength of Thompson’s formulation, it will be seen, relates to the fact that he is able to maintain a ‘critical’ (or pejorative) conception of ideology - thus retaining its usefulness

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<sup>28</sup> John B. Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communications, (Oxford: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishers, 1990), p.65.

as a critical tool of analysis – whilst nonetheless answering to the ‘problem of epistemology’. This relates to the difficulty of criticising a position as ideological, mindful of the fact that one’s own perspective is itself socially embedded.<sup>30</sup>

Following a discussion of these premises, chapter 2 goes on to outline a set of *modus operandi* of ideology. These modus operandi refer to five general modes of operation of ideology that can be applied to an analysis of the New Labour adumbration. Each of these general ‘modes’ contains certain strategies. For example one strategy associated with ‘reification’ is ‘passivization’, and involves the rendering of verbs into the passive form. In this respect, New Labour will allude to how ‘globalisation’ is rewriting the rules of trade, rather than specifically identifying the institutions and individual representatives that collectively come together to rewrite these rules. Thus promulgated so, the mechanics of the process are obscured, and the underlying mechanisms de-politicised.

In addition to reification, another strategy is *legitimisation*, whereby ‘relations of domination’ are portrayed as “just and worthy of support”.<sup>31</sup> The associated strategies here include ‘rationalisation’ and ‘universalisation’, the latter for example, referring to how the discourse is able to persuade others that “institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some individuals serve the interests of all”.<sup>32</sup> Thus, returning to the idea that globalisation gives rise to an experience that is depicted as universal; this can now

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>30</sup> This draws attention to the problem inherent to Marx and his idea of ‘false consciousness’.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.60.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp61-62.

also be interpreted as ideological, in that it purposely denies the possibility that globalisation (as liberalisation) in fact only favours some (in this case the UK). Consequently, thanks to a strategy of ‘universalisation’, legitimacy is achieved by masking the possibility that its current form is made manifest in part thanks to the ability of certain key agents to determine its form, (reflecting the power of some agents to determine outcomes in certain forums).

It will be seen that in a number of respects, the New Labour discourse, as it relates to globalisation, contains many of these *modus operandi*, which will be more thoroughly examined in chapter 6.

#### The Function, Significance and Limitations of the Thesis.

It is important at this stage to clearly demarcate what this thesis is not attempting to do. Firstly, and most importantly, this thesis *is not* an attempt to invalidate the entire New Labour programme.

As outlined at the beginning of this introduction, this thesis does indeed challenge the New Labour interpretation concerning globalisation. Accordingly it can be classified amongst the (growing) body of work that challenges their Third Way approach. However, the nature of this challenge is such that it does not preclude an acceptance that certain, highly significant changes in contemporary society are currently underway. Rather, the author believes that understanding the plurality of changes in terms of a generic concept like ‘globalisation’ is unhelpful. ‘Globalisation’, rather than clarifying issues, in fact performs the opposite function. It obfuscates what is a complex area.

Given that significant changes are indeed underway, New Labour is right, indeed it is their responsibility, to re-examine their position in order to take account of this dynamic changing environment. All governments must in part respond to altering circumstances. Nonetheless, it is necessary to question how accurate their depiction is, given the extent to which they rely upon ‘globalisation’ to explain and validate what they do. As a substitute for more complex thinking about the variety of changes that characterise the contemporary environment, New Labour exploits the idea. This is not simply a mistake on the part of New Labour. I argue that it is possible to go one step further and suggest that such a position does have broader ideological connotations.

What this means is that a policy position can be challenged where it has been validated on an erroneous understanding of globalisation. Highlighting this however, does not necessarily invalidate the particular policy, but rather means that the policy must instead be validated according to a new position. This may of course be possible. Yet justifying a policy in terms other than globalisation, will, I argue, once more involve ‘ideological’ differences coming to the fore. For example, validating increasing ‘flexibility’ in the labour market in terms of globalisation is invalid. That ‘flexibility’ is important can of course nonetheless be sustained, though only in terms of a more specific contextual set of claims relating to the economy (both domestic and international). This is important because it draws attention to options, which in turn, will in part have to be located within the spectrum of left and right.

Secondly, this thesis does not suggest, in some conspiratorial fashion, that New Labour is trying to dupe the public in order to realise certain dubious ends. Rather, I would suggest that it is in the way of politics that ideas are often almost subconsciously evoked for their rhetorical value, and as such manipulated in the process. E.H.Carr makes a profound point when, in relation to the doctrine of the harmony of interests, he posits that it “serves as an ingenious moral device invoked, *in perfect sincerity*, by privileged groups in order to justify and maintain their dominant position”.<sup>33</sup> The degree of sincerity is not quantifiable in this context. Nonetheless, the point I would make is that New Labour, (and particularly its leader), is so enamoured of the idea of globalisation because it validates a particular strategy that they could not more candidly disclose.

In addition to outlining what this thesis does not attempt to do, it is also helpful to outline a number of inherent problems. Of particular significance are problems associated with ‘contemporaneity’ and ‘unity of outlook’.

The contemporary nature of the subject matter of this thesis poses a number of difficulties. To begin with, there exists an ever-burgeoning material that is concerned with globalisation. In chapter 3, I discuss what I refer to as the ‘globalisation literature’ in order to locate and critique New Labour’s own understanding. I make this claim even though it would be an impossible task to include all of this literature, or even a sizable amount. Thus it might be argued that, lacking any definitive understanding of the term

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<sup>33</sup> Edward Hallet Carr, The Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations, (MacMillan & Co. Ltd.: London, 1962), p.42. Emphasis added.

precludes any valid and definitive critique. Nevertheless, there remain a number of reasons why the literature is central.

Firstly, it is possible to identify certain key texts that capture the essentials of the various approaches to globalisation. In chapter 3, I distinguish 'two waves' of thinking about globalisation. A first wave connotes the strong thesis as alluded to previously. In addition, there exists a second wave of thinking, broader and more sophisticated in scope. This second wave can be further distinguished in terms of its aims and objectives. One strand, preoccupied with the strong thesis, remains economic in its focus, and is largely geared towards debunking many of the claims associated with the strong thesis. This strand I have labelled as the sceptics. Additionally, a more varied and complex literature on globalisation can also be identified, which is perhaps more ambitious in its scope. This strand of globalisation I generically label complex globalisation theory. This set of distinctions are generally made by others also writing about the topic, and I believe, with certain qualifications, are valid.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> These qualifications relate to timing and secondly, the extent to which there has actually been a 'debate'. Firstly, in positing that certain 'waves' of thought have developed one essentially assumes a chronological development to the literature. This in turn implies a debate of sorts; that the literature on globalisation has developed as subsequent writers on the topic have entered the fray, aware of initial writings and keen to point out problems in order to stake a new claim. However, there are strong reasons to be sceptical, or at least qualify this position. Firstly, key texts do not engage with the strong thesis, and develop in separate disciplines, reflecting the concerns and approaches of these disciplines. For example, key initial texts can be ascribed to Ohmae (strong thesis/ economicistic concern), but also Robertson, (sociology of religion). Thus 'globalisation' as an idea does not originate solely in the economic (business) literature. Nonetheless, it is this former field, (the business/economic literature) that subsequently popularised the term, coining a particular meaning that came to be the orthodoxy. As a result, hitherto, most literature recognising this to be the case, has thus responded by first qualifying its position vis-à-vis the strong thesis; usually in the initial pages of the argument, before moving on. Keneiche Ohmae, The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy, (London: Collins, 1990). Roland Robertson, Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture, (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

Secondly, any methodological difficulties that follow from the contemporary nature of the discussions as to the nature of globalisation, do not present a significant problem with respect to an analysis of the New Labour position, because it is not actually necessary to arrive at a definitive meaning to 'globalisation'. The quest to arrive at a definitive understanding of globalisation (whether actual or theoretical) is something that most globalisation research has unsurprisingly concentrated on. However, successive waves of thinking on the topic have increasingly problematised previous assumptions and positions. I draw on this 'negative' side to the evolving literature in order to critique the New Labour adumbration, which, it will be seen, largely rests on an account that will be shown to be out of date.

The contemporary nature of the subject matter is also reflected in the fact that the New Labour position has not itself remained entirely static. Indeed, an important part of this thesis will be to highlight this development. As a result, the role and significance of globalisation to New Labour has altered, most recently in response to the development of an increasingly vocal and widespread 'anti-globalisation' lobby.

Following the events of Seattle in late 1999 for example, a number of key speeches on the topic place a new emphasis on the need to 'manage' globalisation. As will be seen, this is significant in that it re-introduces agency into the process of globalisation, something that is on the whole missing in the initial approaches that characterise the New Labour position.<sup>35</sup> Thus in contrast to the idea that globalisation underpins the New

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<sup>35</sup> According to Gordon Brown, in a significant departure from Tony Blair, "[g]lobalization can be for the people or against the people...Badly managed, globalization will lead to wider inequality, deeper division

Labour project, the novel direction taken by this new understanding – to the extent that it takes on board the criticisms expressed by the new social movements – represents a particular kind of challenge to the project as originally formulated. The significance of globalisation here connotes a potentially critical (as opposed to ideological) role. Certain methodological problems may therefore be said to arise as a result of the fact that the position necessarily changes.

There are however, a number of ways in which I deal with this difficulty. The first way is to organise the thesis in accordance with a rough chronology that, it will be seen, reflects the development of thinking on globalisation. Secondly, I also contain the analysis here, to an examination of New Labour's first term of office (1997-2001). Finally, and thirdly, I actually utilise the changing position in order to reinforce both the method and conclusions arrived at in the thesis.

My argument, it will be remembered, is that during its first term of office, the New Labour discourse develops and evolves in line with a differing set of circumstances that, given the context, allow for 'opportunistic' responses. In order to make sense of this, a critical hermeneutic approach is argued for, exactly because it draws attention to the centrality of time, meaning, power, and individuals and their circumstances.

Thus understanding 'globalisation', requires an appreciation of how it has embedded itself in particular circumstances, explaining how it is made manifest as a result of

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and a dangerous era of distrust and rising tension". Gordon Brown, 'Spreading Social Justice Across the World', 16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2001.

certain underlying conditions. This approach, I argue, helps us to understand an important facet of globalisation by conceptualising it as an idea that can only be properly understood when considered in an inherently changeable context. In this case that of the UK. Hence the changing position held too by New Labour actually functions to reinforce a deeper set of conclusions as to the real significance of 'globalisation', explaining how a particular reality is constituted over time.

And this also applies in considering the future significance of globalisation. That is, we must consider the altering circumstances of both New Labour, as well as the way the term is itself altering in the broader context of the UK, in order to make sense of its future significance. It is this that draws attention away from any objective account, highlighting instead its relative nature; relative that is to interests, circumstances and its general acceptance in a particular form.

I develop this argument in the final section of the thesis, and suggest that contemporary developments reinforce the challenge to the interpretation of globalisation hitherto made by Blair and Cook, in a way that poses a potential threat: undermining the very position that 'globalisation' was once meant to underpin. In this respect, in the final section of the thesis I move beyond the time period set here, but only in order to offer a tentative set of conclusions as to the future function and significance of 'globalisation'.

Finally, this last point draws attention to an additional difficulty concerning what I refer to as the problem of 'unity of outlook', something closely related to the problems associated with contemporaneity. This refers to the fact that there are differing

viewpoints on 'globalisation' within New Labour and over time. Hence, whereas Tony Blair stresses the need to respond to globalisation, Robin Cook and Claire Short also stress the need to manage the process. Gordon Brown on the whole refrains from using the term, and so it does not constitute a term of great significance in his speeches.

In answer to this, I have limited my analysis in the main, by concentrating on a few key figures within the party, chiefly Tony Blair, Robin Cook and latterly Clare Short. Each has spoken extensively on the topic, with the content of their speeches capturing all the essential elements of the New Labour approach. Additionally, and given the time period examined here, each figure concerns themselves with the three key areas that play a crucial role with regards to 'globalisation': Blair, the Prime Minister, overseeing and determining domestic policy; Cook, the Foreign Secretary, charged with developing and articulating foreign policy; and Short the Overseas Development Minister at the Department for International Development, concerned with development and poverty eradication.

Secondly, the assumption is made that there in fact exists a certain hierarchy of importance as to the varying views, with Blair being the most important. It is he, in Labour circles, who almost alone until the end of the 1990's developed thinking on globalisation. Of course, he draws on others in his application of the term, yet most significant in this respect, is the fact that Blair, as leader, is the key figure and locus of power. Cook nevertheless, also constitutes a key figure. As Foreign Secretary, he plays an important role in developing the idea of globalisation and its implications in foreign policy terms. Moreoevr, and whereas the New Labour 'machine' keeps a very tight hold

on the reigns on domestic policy, explaining perhaps why any dissenting voices are not heard on the topic, Cook is given considerable scope to develop his ideas in foreign policy because it is seen as a less electorally important.

This also holds for the views of Clare Short at the Department for International Development. But additionally, Short is also an important figure because she is forced to deal with the international consequences of 'globalisation' for economic growth and development. She is therefore, more sensitive to the development and direction that thinking on globalisation takes in this important area.

In recognising a need for redistribution, Short in fact reflects a changing position as a result of an altered perspective of globalisation, one brought about by those groups concerned with poverty alleviation and development. This intervention, forcing on the agenda questions of equity and redistribution, can generally be interpreted as reflecting a return to the left, rather than a move beyond it. In assessing this development, the prognosis as to the required solution, and the actual possibility of this solution coming about means that I arrive only at a qualified conclusion. And in this respect, a nascent third phase, or disjuncture in thinking on globalisation in the New Labour Discourse can be at least be detected, something that I examine in the final chapter, concerned as it is with the future significance of globalisation for New Labour. Nonetheless, the point made in this respect, reinforces the central contention of this thesis – that globalisation has been, and will doubtless continue to be, manipulated according to one's perspective and interests.

## Conclusion.

In sum, chapters 2 and 3, concerned respectively with the concept of ideology and hermeneutics and an understanding of the concept of globalisation, provide the subsequent method and means by which to judge the function and significance of 'globalisation' in the New Labour discourse. Chapter 4 will be concerned with an analysis of the function and limitations of globalisation for thinking about the domestic realm, and chapter 5 the international realm, before relating the two in chapter 6 in order to critique this position in terms of the ideological elements that can be said to reside in the discourse. In this chapter an alternative interpretation will be offered concerning the 'real significance' of globalisation, which is validated according to a set of assumptions about the circumstances of New Labour in power. In the final chapter, chapter 7, I draw attention to the nature of the contemporary challenge represented by the 'new social movements', in order to suggest what the future significance of globalisation may be. This introduces a converse significance to globalisation, moving away from an idea capable of underpinning the New Labour, to a set of processes that may ultimately undermine the project.

## Chapter 2

### A Methodology for Understanding ‘Globalisation’ in Specific Circumstances

#### Introduction

‘Globalisation’ is a social phenomenon, made real by the active and ongoing interpretations of humans, it is not just a spatial phenomenon amenable to understanding in analytical non-interpretative terms. In being understood in a non-interpretative manner, globalisation is ‘de-politicized’ in the sense that it is presented as if it were inevitable and ineluctable. Policy is formulated in *response* to it. Understanding globalisation exclusively in terms of this orientation has made possible the erroneous assumption that its current manifestation does not in fact reflect the vested interests of a minority. Thus, a failure to recognise the non-positivist connotations to ‘globalisation’ has significant consequences, in effect silencing important lines of inquiry.

In this chapter I develop this line of argument by discussing the nature of ideology and what it means to refer to something as being ‘ideological’. To begin, I elaborate upon the particular meaning I ascribe to the concept, one that is synonomous with the work of John Thompson.<sup>1</sup> I locate his work within the broader debate concerning the nature of

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<sup>1</sup> John B. Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication. (Oxford: Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 1990). See also John B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge:

the concept, in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. The strengths of Thompson's (re)formulation it will be seen, are twofold, and stem from the manner in which he is able to maintain a critical function for ideology at the same time as dealing with the 'problem of epistemology'.

Firstly, in arguing for a particular orientation, Thompson vitiates the need to either 'neutralize' or reject the concept, the latter tendency currently being in vogue. Thompson is therefore able to retain an interpretation of ideology as a pejorative thing. The result of this is that the concept of ideology remains a useful critical tool of analysis. However, and secondly, Thompson's position is also important as a result of the hermeneutic perspective that he is led to adopt, offering an important alternative orientation in approaching 'globalisation' in general. As I shall go on to argue in chapter 3, a hermeneutic approach to 'globalisation' allows for a set of novel insights as to its actual nature, and consequently its actual significance. Therefore, in discussing the concept of ideology, I also examine the hermeneutic tradition, and the role that meaning and power plays in the constitution of 'reality'.

In the final section of the chapter I examine the critical inflection Thompson lends to the hermeneutic tradition, which, it will be seen, is distinct from the more conservative orientation associated with the work of Gadamer and his particular brand of philosophical hermeneutics. This will involve focussing on the specific methodology that Thompson outlines, one that he labels 'depth hermeneutics'. In combination with a

series of *modus operandi* of ideology, this will provide a methodology for understanding globalisation in specific circumstances. I therefore outline the essential features of each of these issues, and briefly discuss their relevance to my own stated interests.

### Conceptualising Ideology: Thompson's Typology

Thompson has widely gained recognition over the last twenty years as one of the preeminent theorists of ideology.<sup>2</sup> At the heart of his work has been the aim of rehabilitating a critical conception of ideology. This revival has been undertaken with the intention of countering the tendency, common to contemporary theorising on the topic, of rendering the concept either redundant or stripped of its pejorative and critical association.

Thompson defines ideology in terms of the "the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical".<sup>3</sup> This definition is explicitly critical in its formulation which distinguishes it from a more neutral conception. In addition it posits a particular notion of meaning, one associated with the hermeneutical tradition. To begin this discussion, I examine the countertendencies of Thompson's own orientation, starting with the arguments positing a neutral formulation.

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Polity Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Terry Eagleton, Ideology: An Introduction, (London: Vero, 1991), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture, op.cit., p.7.

The tendency to ‘neutralise’ the concept is typified by the conflation of ideology with “systems of thought”, ‘systems of belief’ or ‘symbolic systems’”.<sup>4</sup> On this view, ideology is construed in terms of ‘isms’, for instance ‘Marxism’, ‘Liberalism’, ‘Conservatism’ etc. For Thompson, “[n]eutral conceptions are those which purport to characterize phenomena as ideology or ideological without implying that these phenomena are necessarily misleading, illusory or aligned with the interests of any particular group.”<sup>5</sup> This ascription of neutrality assigns ideology to all political programmes, be they revolutionary or conservative, propagated by ‘sub-ordinate’ or ‘dominant’ groups.

A sophisticated variant of this conceptualisation occurs in the definition offered by Martin Seliger.<sup>6</sup> Seliger defines ideologies as “sets of ideas by which men [sic] posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.”<sup>7</sup> He contrasts this comprehensive definition, which he labels a ‘total’ account, with ‘partial’ accounts which by their nature deny that they are themselves ideological. On this view, it is only by being partial that they are able to be critical of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p53.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to Martin Seliger, Thompson also considers, Alvin Gouldner, Louis Althusser and Karl Mannheim in this ‘neutral’ category. Alvin B. Gouldner, The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origins, Grammar and Future of Ideology, (London, MacMillan, 1976). Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, (London: Routledge, 1991, c1936). Martin Seliger, Ideology and Politics, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976),

<sup>7</sup> Seliger, Ideology and Politics, op.cit., p.11.

another account. Thus any account which is critical, must accordingly be partial; and so by implication must be unsatisfactory.<sup>8</sup>

As Eagleton has argued, such a formulation has both advantages and disadvantages.<sup>9</sup> On the plus side is the fact that such a formulation remains 'faithful' to a common sense understanding of what ideology is. Such a view avers the disadvantage of considering which 'sets of ideas' are and are not ideological at any one time. This therefore avoids the problem of epistemology, in that it does not postulate that one account is 'true' whilst another is false. What matters is that they are essentially a coherent 'set of ideas' which are in some ways understood to be political in content, and purport as a result to answer questions concerning the appropriate ends and means with regard to attaining the good life.

Nevertheless, in severing any conceptualisation from its social context, Selliger, and the neutral conception in general, fails to recognise what Thompson would consider to be essential to any definition of ideology, and that is the centrality of *power*. The question of power, occurs only when one is willing to factor in the prevailing social context. A neutral account does not do so. Thus, to associate 'ideology' with a set of ideas, as will be demonstrated, fails to recognise the more diffuse sense in which meanings in a society actually operate.<sup>10</sup> They may in fact not have the sort of coherence that Seliger suggests, nor may they be so easily identified.

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<sup>8</sup> This classic distinction first occurs in the work of Mannheim. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Eagleton, *Introduction to Ideology*, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>10</sup> See Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, (London, 1978).

Why particular meanings prevail, perhaps at the expense of others, requires a broader appreciation of the social order in which they exist. Meaning cannot be severed from, or understood in isolation of historical context. A neutral conception considers ideology to be about any set of beliefs motivated by social interests. In so doing the approach jettisons the importance of power, as well as contextual considerations relating to the given social order. The result of this view, is that the 'pejorative' connotation of ideology is rejected, in favour of a more open and neutral understanding of the term. It is for these reasons, considered strengths from a neutral standpoint, that Thompson does not accept a neutral conceptualisation. Thus, if we are to retain the concept of ideology as a critical tool of analysis, then we must reject the neutral position.

An alternative response to this neutral conception of ideology has been to dispense with the concept altogether. As Thompson argues, this has come about because the concept is considered "too ambiguous, too controversial and contested, too deeply marred by a history in which it has been hurled back and forth as a term of abuse".<sup>11</sup> This development can be further differentiated. Firstly, there is the 'end of ideology' thesis, adumbrated forcefully by Daniel Bell et.al.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.6.

<sup>12</sup> On the 'end of ideology debate' see Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties, (Glenco Ill.:Free Press, 1960). Chaim I. Waxman, The End of Ideology Debate, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968).

In essence, this thesis (first posited in the 1950s), postulated that the intensity of ideology was inversely correlated to the degree of economic development.<sup>13</sup> As countries became increasingly 'developed' then so 'ideology' would demise. Ideology, on this view, was associated with 'totalizing' and 'comprehensive' doctrines (for example Marxism and Communism). As such, it was argued that, based on empirical research, it was in fact possible to envisage and indeed discern that the age of ideology was coming to an end.

Nevertheless, the 'end of ideology' debate has largely been dismissed as unsatisfactory on a number of counts.<sup>14</sup> To begin with, this view understood ideology in a particularly limited and contradictory way.<sup>15</sup> The view failed to recognise that the pejorative manner in which ideology was understood was too restrictive, as they were simply equated with such 'totalizing' doctrines as Marxism and Leninism. However, not only did the approach erroneously restrict what constituted an ideology, but also suffered from the technocratic and 'objective' approach to the social which it advocated. This was itself inadequate and not, as it purported to be, 'value free'. In fact, as Eagleton points out, the totalizing (read Marxist) views which they sought to replace were inspired by a particular political orientation, reflecting the cold war situation of the late 1950's.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Carlsnaes, The Concept of Ideology and Political Analysis: A Critical Examination of its Usage by Marx, Lenin, and Mannheim. (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), p.237. See also Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, op.cit., p19.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion centering around this debate see the series of essays contained in Waxman, *The End of Ideology Debate*, op.cit.

<sup>15</sup> Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*, op.cit., p.4. Quoted in Eagleton, *Introduction to Ideology*, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.8.

The second strain of thought, synonomous with Foucault, advocates replacing the concept of ideology with the more capacious term ‘discourse’, reflecting a more diffuse appreciation of power.<sup>17</sup> In opting for a more capacious term to replace ideology Foucault sought to reflect the more diffuse and ubiquitous identification of power with knowledge. Power, in this Foucauldian sense, “is not something confined to armies and parliaments: it is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of force which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances.”<sup>18</sup> This generates a problem for the continued use of the concept, should one wish to retain its critical, that is its pejorative, association. The problem rests upon the premise that to retain a critical association ideology must relate to the social context and so be concerned with relations of power and dominance.

Power in the sense in which Foucault uses it is ubiquitous.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, as Eagleton points out, “if there are no values and beliefs *not* bound up with power, then the term ideology threatens to expand to vanishing point.”<sup>20</sup> True to task Foucault drops the term opting instead for ‘discourse’.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless Foucault’s problem remains, in that the question remains as to how one might legitimately discern between the relative significance of power in differing circumstances. In opting for the term discourse, Foucault is still unable to provide a means of discriminating between the *significance* of

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<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, (New York: Pantheon books, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Eagleton, Introduction to Ideology, op.cit. p.7. See also Umberto Eco, Travels in Hyper-Reality: Essays, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p.244.

<sup>19</sup> See Tim Dant, Knowledge, Ideology and Discourse: A Sociological Perspective, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp199-201.

<sup>20</sup> Eagleton, Introduction to Ideology, op.cit., p.7.

different power struggles. The relativist connotations of Foucault's account entail no guidance as to which struggles should be deemed the weightier. As Eagleton wryly comments, "[a] breakfast-time quarrel between husband and wife over who exactly allowed the toast to turn a grotesque shade of black need not be ideological; it becomes so when, for example, it begins to engage questions of sexual power, beliefs about gender roles and so on".<sup>22</sup> Thus insightful as Foucault's theory is, his analysis of power at the 'micro level' nonetheless fails to link up ultimately with the 'macro level'.<sup>23</sup> Failing to bridge this gap significantly weakens the critical potential of his project.

Thus both the neutral and dismissive options, each formulated in response to perceived limitations to the concept of ideology, are themselves limited in certain crucial respects. The neutral conception, though valid, comes at the price of severing the concept from any contextual considerations. This strips the concept of its critical associations and pejorative character. The 'end of ideology' thesis is also unsound, in that it is based on an unacceptable epistemology. Finally, the 'Foucauldian' response, sensitive to the problems of epistemology, nonetheless is problematic in that its rejection of the concept ultimately leads to an inability to analytically distinguish between power struggles and their relative significance.

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<sup>21</sup> For an informative introduction to the concept of 'discourse' as used by Foucault, see Alec Mc Houl & Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*, (New York: New York University Press, 1993), Ch. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Eagleton, *Introduction to Ideology*, op.cit., p.8.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Gill, 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation and Disciplinary Neo-Liberalism', in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No.3, 1995, p.403.

#### Four Critical Formulations of Ideology.

In addition to the neutral conception of ideology, there are what Thompson labels the critical conceptions which have lent the concept its traditionally pejorative association.<sup>24</sup> Thompson classifies these into four categories according to their criteria of negativity, these being either: abstract and impractical; erroneous and illusory; expressing dominant interests; and sustaining relations of domination.<sup>25</sup> Some formulations contain more than one of these criteria, for instance Thompson argues that Marx's writings contain all four elements. Thompson himself retains only one of these criteria of negativity, 'the criterion of sustaining relations of domination'. For Thompson, this stems from the inherent inadequacies of each and from the hermeneutical premises of his approach. I therefore briefly outline each criterion, and consider some of the associated problems that each faces, before then going on to consider in more depth the hermeneutical position that Thompson takes.

The first criteria of negativity outlined by Thompson, is found in the position Napoleon takes in response to the work of the *ideologues*, such as Destutt de Tracy.<sup>26</sup> This position sees ideology as being abstract or impractical.<sup>27</sup> Thus on this view, to criticise a position as ideological, is to denigrate it as a result of its unrealistic pretensions. In Napoleon's words:

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<sup>24</sup> For an alternative, more limited understanding of ideology as inherently pejorative see Jorge Larrain, The Concept of Ideology, (London: Hutchinson, 1979). Larrain understands negativity to refer to those forms "of false consciousness or necessary deception which somehow distorts men's understanding of social reality". P.14.

<sup>25</sup> See Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.54

<sup>26</sup> Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*, op.cit., p.22.

[i]t is to the doctrine of the ideologues- to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on this foundation would erect the legislation of peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history- to which one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen our beloved France.<sup>28</sup>

In coining the term ‘ideology’, Destutt de Tracy had in mind a science of ideas, which he considered to be the ‘first science’.<sup>29</sup> Based on the assumption that we cannot know a thing ‘in itself’ but only have an *idea* of these things passed onto us through our senses, Destutt de Tracy posited that an analysis of ideas and sensations along scientific grounds was possible, and as such would provide the basis for rethinking how one might refashion the social order.<sup>30</sup> As Larrain points out, this is the initial positive (neutral) connotation of ideology: “it is the rigorous science of ideas which, by overcoming religious and metaphysical prejudices, may serve as a new basis for public education”.<sup>31</sup>

It is in reaction to such a project that Napoleon, particularly as his own position became more tenuous, responds. Napoleon considered the pretensions of the *ideologues* such as Destutt de Tracy to be unsatisfactory due to their overly abstract and by implication unrealistic nature. For Napoleon, ideology was “the pretentious philosophy that incited

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<sup>27</sup> For an account of Napoleon on this topic see Eagleton, *Introduction to Ideology*, op.cit., pp.66-69. For an account of the life of DeStutt de Tracy, see Emmet Kennedy, *Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of 'Ideology': A Philosophe in the Age of Revolution*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Arne Naess, *Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity: Studies in the Semantics and Cognitive Analysis of Ideological Controversy*, (Oslo: Norwegian Research Council, 1956), p.151.

<sup>29</sup> See Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.30.

<sup>30</sup> On the influence of Enlightenment thinkers in the work of Destutt de Tracy, particularly Bacon and Condorcet, see Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, op.cit., Ch. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.28.

rebellion by trying to determine political and pedagogical principles on the basis of reasoning alone".<sup>32</sup>

The point to make in relation to the argument here is that essentially, this critical conception of ideology is nonetheless inadequate, primarily because of what it is critical of, that is the definition offered by Destutt de Tracy.<sup>33</sup> In other words, ideology *qua* science of ideas, does not stand up to scrutiny, as it contains an unsatisfactory epistemology. Thus only if one conceives of ideology in this way does it make sense to be critical of it in the manner of Napoleon. Though this may seem a rather curious argument, the significance of this initial set of arguments stem from its consequences. As Larrain posits, the consequences of these beginnings are of significance because the pejorative association attached to the term remains, orienting the manner in which the concept is to be considered throughout its controversial history.<sup>34</sup>

It is this initial pejorative association which is taken up by Marx and modified to become one of the central planks of his entire corpus of work. This is important because it is the writings of Marx, more than any other, who entrenches the term in the modern setting; as a concept that ought to be considered indispensable for any understanding of modern society. However, it is not my purpose here to evaluate in detail Marx's conception of ideology. Such a task is beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover, the author appreciates

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<sup>32</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.33.

<sup>33</sup> In fact Destutt de Tracy came to recognise this in his later writings. See Roland N. Stromberg, European Intellectual History Since 1789, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> For an account of the development of the concept in addition to those already cited, see George Lichtheim, The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays, (New York: Random House, 1967), pp3-46; Hans Barth, Truth and Ideology, (trans. Fredrick Lilge), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

that such an undertaking would involve engaging in a controversial area, in which there exists a variety of interpretations concerning Marx's account of ideology. I use Marx here in order to contrast some of his explicit writings on ideology to those contained in Thompson's account. This is done in order to demonstrate the novelty of Thompson's reformulation, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. It is undertaken because Thompson's account explicitly seeks to retain the critical and pejorative associations to be found in Marx himself.

In brief, there are a number of positions taken on Marx and his account of ideology.<sup>35</sup> Most numerous are those who take up Marx's initial ideas and then seek to modify them on the basis of perceived inadequacies. In the Marxist tradition, writers including Lenin, Lukacs, Gramsci, Althusser and Callinicos each share the conviction that Marx's epistemological position on the nature of ideology is unsustainable. Each switches from a 'negative' to a 'neutral' account of the term in response.<sup>36</sup> This response can in large part be seen as a result of the epistemological problems that beset the next critical conception of ideology.

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<sup>35</sup> See Martin Seliger, The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Jorge Larrain, Marxism and Ideology, (London: MacMillan, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> In this context, Lenin speaks of a 'socialist ideology' and Lukacs of a 'proletarian ideology'. V.I.Lenin, What is to be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement, (New York: International Publishers, 1969), p.41. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, (Trans. Rodney Livingstone), (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.76. See also Rosalind Coward & John Ellis, Language and Materialism, (London: Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1977), p90; Goran Therborn, The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology, (London: NLB, 1980), p5; Alex Callinicos, Marxism and Philosophy, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p134.

This second critical conception of ideology refers to ideology as being something essentially 'illusory' or 'erroneous', "as an inverted or distorted image of what is 'real'".<sup>37</sup>

In criticising this view, Thompson draws attention to the unsatisfactory formulation in which the 'realm of ideas' is seen to reflect social 'reality' in a *distorted* fashion. Such a view erroneously contends that 'social reality' "exists prior to and independently of these images or ideas".<sup>38</sup> Writing in the 'German Ideology', Marx and Engels argue that "[t]he phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises".<sup>39</sup>

As with Lenin, Lukacs and those writers that are critical of this aspect of Marx's writings, Thompson also takes issue with this epistemology. For Thompson, "[t]he symbolic forms through which we express ourselves and understand others do not constitute some ethereal other world which stands opposed to what is real: rather, they are partially constitutive of what, in our societies 'is real'".<sup>40</sup> The problem therefore is that at the heart of criticisms about ideology being 'illusory' are a set of presuppositions concerning knowledge. Marx's account posits the primacy of the physical world.<sup>41</sup> It is this 'materialism' which, in distinction to 'idealism', enables such a view; in Marx's words "the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and

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<sup>37</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.9. See also Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.60.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Marx & Fredrich Engels, The German Ideology, (ed. C.J.Arthur), (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996), p.47.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.10.

<sup>41</sup> See Karl Marx & Fredrich Engels, 'Theses On Feurbach', in Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, op.cit., pp121-123. It should be noted that Marx nonetheless qualifies his materialist premises; "[t]he chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (that of Feurbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively". Emphasis in original, p.121.

translated into forms of thought".<sup>42</sup> However for Thompson, this is mistaken, and it is for this reason that he does not ally himself with such a position.<sup>43</sup>

In examining Marx, Thompson in fact identifies a number of conceptualisations of ideology, which correspond to his own critical categorisations, and are thus worth briefly outlining. These are the 'polemical', the 'epi-phenomenal' and the 'latent' conceptualistion. The polemical conception sees ideology as being "a theoretical doctrine and activity which erroneously regards ideas as autonomous", a doctrine which "fails to grasp the real conditions and characteristics of social life".<sup>44</sup> This obviously corresponds to the above category, and in as much as Thompson takes issue with it, he can be seen as critiquing 'materialism' and its epistemology.

The second conceptualisation Thompson identifies in Marx, the 'epi-phenomenal' conception, sees ideology as being reduceable to the ideas of the dominant class, which nonetheless are illusory, and serve their interests. This view corresponds, not only with the ideas of ideology as something inherently illusory (the second of Thompson's critical conceptualisations), but also associates ideology with a 'dominant' class. This is well illustrated in the following quote:

[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material force* of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it... . The individuals composing the ruling class... rule

<sup>42</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, I, Postface to the second edition, p.102. Quoted in Edward Reiss, *Marx: A Clear Guide*, (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p.88.

<sup>43</sup> This point will be taken up at a later stage, in the section on hermeneutics.

<sup>44</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.35.

also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.<sup>45</sup>

The problem with this view however, is that it restricts any analysis of relations of domination to *class* relations, even though it might be said that there are a variety of forms of domination – such as gender relations, ethnic relations and so on. Therefore, to restrict any analysis to class relations is unsatisfactory.

The final conception associated with Marx, the ‘latent’ conceptualisation, occurs where the system of ideas “orients individuals towards the past rather than the future”.<sup>46</sup> This latent conceptualisation figures in Marx’s famous passage taken from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

[t]he tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolution using themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirit of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time honoured disguise and this borrowed language.<sup>47</sup>

Here Marx laments as to the difficulty for the living to “face with sober senses”, their “real conditions of life”.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the problematic epistemology already discussed, there is an added complication concerning the function of tradition and history in the thought processes of people. Contained in Marx and Engels’s writings, is the belief that

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<sup>45</sup> Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, op.cit, pp.64-65. Emphasis in original.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p41.

<sup>47</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976), p10.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Marx & Fredrick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *Selected Works in One Volume* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1968), p.38. Quoted in Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.40.

tradition and prejudice are negative and avoidable. Such an approach is typical of Enlightenment thinking in this regard, in which reason and method are contrasted with prejudice and tradition.<sup>49</sup>

Thompson gives the label 'latent' in this context, as Marx was not explicit about accounting for this range of social phenomena - 'spirits', 'customs' and 'traditions' - in a more precise fashion. Thompson points out that Marx recognises that "[t]hese traditional symbols and values are not swept away once and for all by the constant revolutionising of production; they live on, they modify and transform themselves, indeed they reappear as a potent reactionary force on the eve of revolution itself".<sup>50</sup> In effect one could interpret Marx's writings in one of two ways concerning this point. Firstly one could argue that Marx is frustrated by this fact but does not consider it to be a profound point, as the past is not indispensable to the future - one can free one-self from the yoke of the past. This position is in line with other parts of his theory, and perhaps resonates more in his later writings.<sup>51</sup>

Alternatively one might adopt a different position and argue that in fact Marx had recognised, though for reasons of expediency perhaps played down, a very significant indeed profound point concerning the essential historicity and development of man in society. This point is taken up in the section on hermeneutics further into the chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> On this point see Georgia Warnke, Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>51</sup> A distinction is often made between the 'early' and 'late' writings of Marx. The late writings are generally considered to be more 'objectivist' in tone and aspiration. On this point see Alvin Gouldner, The

The point that needs to be made here concerns the validity of the second reading of Marx, and how it relates to a hermeneutical position.

This second reading disputes the possibility of 'clean breaks', or ruptures occurring in the development of societies. Only gradual accretions of change are permissible, though the rate of that change perhaps can vary. This position follows from a hermeneutical interpretation of man and society, and thus Thompson is more sympathetic to it. On this account, prejudice and tradition are 'rehabilitated', and in stark contrast to objectivist aspirations, not given a necessarily pejorative connotation. History on this account is considered to be operative in the present, and essential to it, because a person is always embedded in his or her tradition.

So, in summary, the differences with Marx stem from a number of limitations. For Marx, ideology 'distorts'; it presents the 'real conditions of life' in an 'illusory' form. From this perspective, what is required is a recognition of this illusory form. Fundamentally, 'the real' can be got at as its status exists separately from the interpretation of it. All that perpetuates the illusion is 'ideological'. The ruling class is assigned agency in this regard, and one ought therefore to be suspicious of their account of things. All that is ideological is therefore inherently negative. As Larrain points out, ideology is eminently negative because the concept "means a form of false consciousness or necessary deception which somehow distorts men's understanding of social reality".<sup>52</sup> Assuming

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<sup>51</sup> Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory, (London: Macmillan Press, 1980), Ch.3; 'Appendix One', pp155-163.

<sup>52</sup> Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, op.cit., p.14.

this position enables Marx to deny (or indeed not even consider) that his own account is itself a form of ‘ideology’.

And the problem with this account, in essence, boils down to the shortcomings of the epistemology. Because it fails to take into account one’s own viewpoint, subsequent thinkers like Mannheim are lead to consider his conceptualisation as being only partial and so ultimately unsatisfactory.<sup>53</sup> As Mannheim argues, “[a]s long as one does not call his own position into question but regards it as absolute, while interpreting his opponents’ ideas as a mere function of the social positions they occupy, the decisive step forward has not been taken”.<sup>54</sup> Mannheim himself, adopts a neutral posture with regards to ideology as a result, which he argues constitutes that ‘decisive’ step. However for Marx this is not a problem, and therefore not a necessary step, because his epistemology is essentially ‘materialist’. This vitiates any problems concerning the *status* of ‘social reality’. The problem is merely to facilitate a recognition of this reality.

The position Thompson takes, begins from the premise that the concept of ideology requires reformulation as a result of the inadequate epistemology hitherto orienting critical ideologies. The approach that has resulted - one leading towards its dismissal, the other leading to the neutralization of the concept - is nonetheless understandable. However such a view is considered to be unsatisfactory because it lacks a critical and pejorative association. It is the critical legacy of Marx which Thompson seeks to retain.

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<sup>53</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, op.cit., p.68. Quoted in Carlsnaes, *The Concept of Ideology and Political Analysis*, op.cit., p.184.

This brings us to the fourth criterion of negativity: whether or not it ‘sustains relations of domination’. As has been argued, the first three criteria are unsatisfactory. We can reject arguments that reduce ideology to that which is illusory or erroneous because it places too heavy a burden on the analyst to demonstrate “that the phenomena so characterised are in some sense ‘false’”.<sup>55</sup> However in taking such a position Thompson does not deny that “ideology may operate by concealing or masking social relations, by obscuring or misrepresenting situations”.<sup>56</sup> Rather, he argues that such a position is not *essential* to any definition. As has been argued, the criterion of negativity that associates ideology with a dominant class is also considered unsatisfactory because this is too limited in its scope, failing to recognise alternative dimensions to inequalities in power, such as gender or ethnicity for example. And finally the association of ideology with that which is impractical or abstract has been dismissed as this was merely formulated in response to an erroneous understanding of ideology as a ‘science of ideas’ in the first place.

This in effect leaves Thompson with the fourth criterion which refers to ‘relations of domination’. His concern is with how they are established and how they are sustained. This concern with relations of domination places ideology into the social context, and therefore enables questions of power and dominance to be re-introduced to the concept, which in turn enables a critical/pejorative association to be maintained. As a result this formulation at once distances itself from Marx’s formulation and maintains some key

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. For an evaluation of Mannheim see Larain, *The Concept of Ideology*, op.cit., chapter 4; A.P. Simonds, Karl Mannheim’s Sociology of Knowledge, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Susan J. Hekman, Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).

<sup>55</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.57.

aspects. To argue in more detail why a critical rehabilitation is superior, I now turn to an examination of the problem of epistemology for any conceptualisation of ideology.

#### Hermeneutics and the Problem of Epistemology: Thompson's Fourth Critical Conceptualisation.

Thompson argues that the problem of epistemology and conceptualisation is best addressed by the hermeneutic tradition of thought. This tradition, it is argued, can provide an adequate framework which maintains the critical dimension to the concept, and yet also furnish an adequate 'method' for study. This method thus enables an interpretation of ideology to be undertaken. I therefore now elaborate in more detail upon the broader hermeneutical orientation that informs his (and my) work, as this will enable a more thoroughgoing evaluation of the validity of a critical ideology, and its pertinence to the examination of the discourse of globalisation.

Thompson's approach to the task of reformulating the concept of ideology has been oriented by his commitment to hermeneutics, and more particularly to a method known as depth hermeneutics. In adopting a hermeneutical framework, Thompson draws upon a tradition whose lineage stems back to the Greeks, though it is a tradition which has evolved in a decisive direction nonetheless.<sup>57</sup> In essence hermeneutics is concerned with "the relationship between meaning, interpretation and understanding".<sup>58</sup> Contemporary

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> For a historical overview of the development of Hermeneutics see Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleirmacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer, (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1969).

<sup>58</sup> Richard Shapcott, 'Conversation and Coexistence: Gadamer and the Interpretation of International Society', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Spring Vol.23, 1994, p.70.

hermeneutics, as Rabinow and Sullivan point out, recognise that “[c]ultural meaning as intersubjective and irreducibly fundamental to understanding is the base-point of the whole interpretive project”.<sup>59</sup>

However, this was not always the case. Traditionally, hermeneutics merely referred to a canon of rules or methods concerned with eliciting the meaning of a text, usually legal or biblical.<sup>60</sup> It was assumed that the biblical (or legal) ‘text’ contained an essential (true) meaning, explicitly penned by the author. Hermeneutics, as a result, was concerned with establishing an appropriate method in order to arrive at a definitive understanding of the text. Hence hermeneutics was chiefly concerned with refining its method of interpretation.

As time passed a succession of thinkers broadened the scope of hermeneutics, such that the ‘text’ or object of inquiry (*die Sache*), became more than just the biblical and legal text, to include history as well as literary texts.<sup>61</sup> Thus by the time Dilthey tackled the subject in the late nineteenth century, hermeneutics could be conceived as providing “a general methodology for the human sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*]”.<sup>62</sup>

Distinguishing between explanation and understanding, Dilthey posited that the latter were the concern of the human sciences as this realm was intrinsically concerned with

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<sup>59</sup> Paul Rabinow & William M. Sullivan, (eds.), Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.6.

<sup>60</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, (Trans Joel Weinsheimer), Truth and Method, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), p.505.

<sup>61</sup> See Warnke, Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason, op.cit., p.2. Alan How, The Habermas – Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social, (Avebury: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1995), pp7-10.

meaning. In addition to distinguishing the natural sciences and human sciences according to the methods of explanation and understanding, Dilthey also provided the insight “that knowledge which is derived from the human sciences is intrinsically historical”, raising the difficult question of epistemology.<sup>63</sup> However, for Dilthey this did not preclude the possibility of objectivity.<sup>64</sup>

It is with Gadamer, drawing upon the insights of Heidegger and phenomenological thinkers such as Husserl, that hermeneutics is reformulated in a radical way.<sup>65</sup> This radical shift centres on hermeneutics being at once ‘universalised’ and given an ontological basis.<sup>66</sup> In so doing, hermeneutics is no longer associated with being a mere ‘method’ of interpretation. The reformulation explicitly involves a disassociation with any ‘objectivist’ aspirations that had hitherto been a part of the hermeneutical enterprise. As Warnke points out, “[f]or the whole of his [Gadamer’s] philosophical career... his concern has been to overcome the positivist hubris of assuming that we can develop an ‘objective’ knowledge of the phenomena with which we are concerned”<sup>67</sup>

In breaking with its traditional preoccupation with method, Gadamer reorients hermeneutical studies, focusing instead upon understanding and ‘how it is possible’.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Shapcott, *Conversation and Coexistence*, op.cit., p.70.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> See Ilse Nina Bulhof, Wilhelm Dilthey, a Hermeneutic Approach to the Study of History and Culture, (London: Nijhoff, 1980).

<sup>65</sup> For an understanding of the influence of Heidegger and Husserl on Gadamer’s work see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, op.cit., part III.

<sup>66</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem’, in Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, (London: University of California, Berkeley, 1976), pp3-17.

<sup>67</sup> Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, op.cit., p.1.

<sup>68</sup> Shapcott, *Conversation and Coexistence*, op.cit., p.71.

As Giddens points out, “[w]hereas for earlier authors *verstehen* was treated primarily as a method which an historian or social scientist uses to gain a systematic access to his ‘subject matter’, Gadamer regards it as the condition and mode of human intersubjectivity as such”.<sup>69</sup> It is to this insight - that our object of investigations are (already) a meaningful domain making possible understanding in the first place - that Gadamer, following Heidegger, is able to conclude that as such, all understanding presupposes an already existing interpretation. This preinterpreted domain constitutes our tradition, into which we are born and which enables us to make sense of the world. Gadamer posits that one’s tradition is what makes possible understanding in the first place; reflecting our essential historicity. Thus it is important to recognise that “[l]ong before we understand ourselves in retrospective reflection, we understand ourselves in self-evident ways in the family, society and state in which we live”.<sup>70</sup>

However, and contrary to the enlightenment tradition, the role of ‘prejudice’ and ‘tradition’ must be understood in a particular (non pejorative) way. Prejudices *qua* ‘pre-judgments’ are as a result unavoidable; how else are we able to make sense of our world? The key question becomes how to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate prejudices?<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, (London: Hutchinson of London, 1977), p.136.

<sup>70</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, op.cit., p.245.

<sup>71</sup> In Gadamer’s words, it is crucial to discriminate between “the true prejudices by which we understand from the false ones by which we misunderstand”. Ibid., p.266. Quoted in Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, op.cit., p.82.

In reformulating the hermeneutical task in this way, hermeneutics is no longer associated with being a mere 'method' of interpretation. In the first instance, the emphasis is placed on ontology rather than questions of epistemology and method. Nonetheless, questions of epistemology still arise. Gadamer's concern is to explicitly purge hermeneutics of any remaining 'objectivist' pretensions. Yet his account is significant because it also raises the question of epistemology (which as discussed strikes at the heart of ideology) offering a novel 'solution' to problematic issues relating to the nature of truth.

A philosophical hermeneutical position denies the possibility of recovering any essentially 'true' meaning in a text, i.e., the position denies that there exists an objective meaning. As a result, this orientation takes issue with the idea of there existing any 'foundations' to knowledge. However, hermeneutics denies that knowledge without foundations must ultimately be 'relativist'. Bernstein associates this position with what he labels the 'Cartesian anxiety'.<sup>72</sup> Such a view erroneously presents the debate surrounding objectivity in an 'either/ or' way: "[e]ither there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, or we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos".<sup>73</sup>

To take a relativist position is to preclude the possibility of discerning at all between one interpretation and another. As Gadamer argues, "the naïve belief in the objectivity of historical method was a delusion. But what replaces it is not a simple relativism. Indeed,

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<sup>72</sup> See Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.18.

it is not chance and not arbitrary who we ourselves are and what we can hear from the past."<sup>74</sup> It is this non-arbitrary position which is at the hub of the argument here. As Thompson argues, "there is a great deal of room on the spectrum between incontestable demonstration and arbitrary choice, and the interpretation of ideology, like all forms of interpretation, lies in the region inbetween".<sup>75</sup> For philosophical hermeneutics, it is the dialogical nature of truth that vitiates the problem of relativism.

A dialogical approach in this context, posits that claims to truth are "...contingent upon an intersubjective consensus rather than upon a transcendental subject".<sup>76</sup> Embedded in a tradition, and therefore unable to distance ourselves from it, truth is continuously disclosed through a 'process of application'. This process of application concerns "the expectation of encountering both meaning and truth in that which is to be interpreted".<sup>77</sup> Therefore the understanding of truth, is better conceived in terms of 'disclosure' rather than correspondence.

What is more, one's tradition does not constitute a rigid framework. Gadamer argues that traditions are not static, nor do they preclude an openness to otherness.<sup>78</sup> As such Gadamer's formulation escapes the criticisms of Popper, who in discussing the 'myth of the framework', dismisses this position, as it assumes that we are "prisoners caught in the

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<sup>74</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Wahrheit in den Geisteswissenschaften', in *Kleine Schriften*, J.C.B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1967, Vol. 1, Philosophie, Hermeneutik, p.42. Quoted in Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*, op.cit., p.81.

<sup>75</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., pp71-72.

<sup>76</sup> David C. Hoy, The Critical Circle, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p.110. Quoted in Shapcott, *Conversation and Coexistence*, op.cit., p.73.

<sup>77</sup> G.B. Madison, The Hermeneutics of Post-Modernity: Figures and Themes, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.115. Quoted in Shapcott, *Conversation and Coexistence*, op.cit., p74.

framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language".<sup>79</sup> Such a view precludes the possibility of communicating or judging others outside of our framework (culture).

### Depth Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Ideology

The insights of contemporary hermeneutics inform the manner in which Thompson reformulates the concept of ideology: "the study of symbolic forms is fundamentally and inescapably a matter of understanding and interpretation".<sup>80</sup> For Thompson, 'symbolic forms' covers "a broad range of actions and utterances, images and texts, which are produced by subjects and recognised by them and others as meaningful constructs".<sup>81</sup>

The sense in which Thompson understands ideology therefore begins from a recognition that 'words and symbols' are "a creative and constitutive feature of a social life which [is] sustained and reproduced, contested and transformed, through actions and interactions which include the ongoing exchange of symbolic forms".<sup>82</sup> However, the concept of ideology adds a twist to this, referring "to the ways in which meaning serves, in particular circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical".<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.74.

<sup>79</sup> Karl Popper, 'Normal Science and its Dangers', in Imre Lakatos & Alan Musgrave, (eds.), Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.56.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.271.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.7.

The influence of hermeneutics begins with Thompson's explicit recognition of the constitutive role that meaning plays in the social world. But in addition to the recognition of meaning and its constitutive features is a recognition of power also. As Thompson argues "social life is, to some extent, a field of contestation in which struggle takes place through words and symbols as well as through the use of physical force".<sup>84</sup> This formulation incorporates novel features which distinguish *critical* hermeneutics from the philosophical hermeneutic understanding articulated by someone like Gadamer. This follows because ideology, understood as meaning functioning "in the service of power", must formulate a critical stance vis-à-vis the existing social milieu.<sup>85</sup> As such the analysis of ideology involves a concern with the various "ways in which meaning is mobilized in the social world" and how this serves the interests of groups occupying positions of power.<sup>86</sup> It is questions of power and dominance that give a critical thrust to his formulation and this is an area not examined by Gadamer, whose concerns were of a more philosophical nature.

This departure is significant because it anticipates a problem with the philosophical hermeneutical formulation, and that is its apparent conservatism. Gadamer's rehabilitation of tradition and prejudice are inherently conservative.<sup>87</sup> The dialogic position on truth functions as a result of one being prepared to accept that the 'text' or *die Sache*, has something to say which is of worth. This anticipation in a sense eclipses the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.7. Emphasis added.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.55

<sup>87</sup> In this vein Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between two 'poles' in the modern hermeneutic tradition; a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and a 'hermeneutics of faith'; Gadamer falling into the latter category. Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1970), pp.28-36.

possibility of systematically distorted interpretations. It is this problem that Thompson addresses when juxtaposing the concept of ideology and hermeneutics.

Thus a 'critical' hermeneutical alternative should not be seen as taking issue with the underlying premises of a philosophical hermeneutical stance. On this, Thompson is in agreement with Gadamer. Rather, Thompson departs company with Gadamer in the sense that he attempts to apply the insights of this approach in a more critical fashion, one that is sensitive to the extent to which meaning is manipulated for purposes of domination.

In sketching out how 'meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination', Thompson articulates a methodology he terms as 'depth hermeneutics'. This technique involves three interrelated elements or 'phases'. The first phase is that of social-historical analysis. The concern here, is to "reconstruct the social and historical conditions of the production, circulation and reception of symbolic forms".<sup>88</sup> This will involve giving due consideration to such factors as the 'spatio-temporal setting' and 'social structure' in which symbolic symbols subsist. In relation to my own concerns this entails that the analyst considers the timing and circumstances that gave rise to a term like 'globalisation'. It draws attention to the need to consider who uses the term, and the position that they have in the social structure (for example are they in a position of 'power'?).

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<sup>88</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.282.

The second phase of the depth hermeneutic technique focusses on the ‘formal’ or ‘discursive’ dimension, and of relevance to this thesis, draws attention to the central importance of argumentative analysis. In this respect:

The aim of argumentative analysis is to reconstruct and render explicit the patterns of inference which characterize the discourse...[enabling] the analyst to break up the discursive corpus into sets of claims and topics in terms of certain logical, or quasi-logical, operators (implication, contradiction, presupposition, exclusion, etc.).<sup>89</sup>

Given that this thesis is concerned with examining the function and significance of globalisation to New Labour, this aspect of the depth hermeneutic technique draws attention to the need to consider such matters as: the presuppositions surrounding ‘globalisation’ (it is seen as ‘progressive’, ‘obvious’, ‘unavoidable’, a ‘thing-in-itself’); the implications implied by the process, (further liberalisation, openness, and flexibility); the subsequent claims that follow from the understanding, (it is universally beneficial, encouraging co-operation and peaceable relations); plus the way in which the argument validates and grounds itself (the facts ‘speak for themselves’).

The third phase of the depth hermeneutic approach concerns interpretation, or ‘re-interpretation’. To ascribe a meaning to the formal analysis, now located with a broader social-historical context, we must engage in a ‘creative construction of meaning’:

[i]n developing an interpretation which is mediated by the methods of the depth-hermeneutic approach, we are re-interpreting a pre-interpreted domain; we are projecting a possible meaning which may diverge from the meaning construed by subjects who make up the social-historical world.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.289.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.290.

There are however, added elements to employing the depth hermeneutic technique to the interpretation of ideology, because a 'critical inflection' is added. In this sense, "[t]o interpret ideology is to explicate the connection between the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms and the relations of domination which that meaning serves to establish and sustain".<sup>91</sup> That part of the analysis concerned with the social-historical examination then, "directs our attention towards the relations of domination which characterize the context within which symbolic forms are produced and received".<sup>92</sup> Domination, as understood here, refers to the ways in which "established relations of power are 'systematically asymmetrical', that is, when particular agents or groups of agents are endowed with power in a durable way which excludes... other[s]".<sup>93</sup> The third phase thus allows for a re-interpretation of the second phase, leading to the possibility of interpreting an ideological dimension to the position.

Combined, each of these phases directs our attention to "an initial access to the modes of operation of ideology".<sup>94</sup> This relates to how ideology actually operates (*modus operandi*). Drawing upon a broad corpus of work, Thompson categorises a set of *modus operandi*, which in turn are linked with a set of *strategies of symbolic construction*. However, before outlining these *modus operandi*, a number of qualifications need to be mentioned. The first point to be made is that Thompson does not claim to be offering an exhaustive account, and that each of these categories are not mutually exclusive. He claims rather, that his aim "is simply to stake out, in a preliminary manner, a rich field of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.293

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.292

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.59.

analysis".<sup>95</sup> And indeed this point should be clarified from the outset as it applies to my own intentions.

Secondly, as has been shown already, critical ideologies have suffered in the past from an unsatisfactory epistemology which has undermined their position. Though a hermeneutical orientation is capable of rectifying these shortcomings, it does so at a cost however. A more diffuse concern with meanings requires a more broad-ranging and diffuse means of analysis. This in turn entails that a more complex set of categorisations and strategies be recognised. It is probably not an attainable end therefore to provide a comprehensive strategy that in turn can claim to provide all the answers in this area.

Thirdly, by definition, a definitive position cannot be staked. This is because the context is always changing, not least because our interpretations of the object domain - a constitutive feature - alters that domain as a result of our understanding of it.<sup>96</sup> This however, does not invalidate my orientation. What it does do is set limits to any project, and qualify any answers to which one might arrive.

Finally, and importantly, this method does not set out to invalidate more 'social scientific' methods, but instead 'qualifies' such an approach. There are relatively persistent structural features in the social realm which validate a structuralist approach, and therefore allow for a more objectivist position to be taken. It is important to

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p.293

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.60.

recognise that a critical hermeneutical orientation does not rule out these 'structural features', and so does not eschew 'social scientific' methods. Thus, and contrary to Dilthey, understanding is not contrasted to explanation as an alternative mutually exclusive orientation. Rather it does not recognise such an approach as being the last say on the matter.

With this born in mind I now elaborate upon the various categories of modes of operation of ideology, as outlined in the table below. At this stage, this will only be done in summary fashion before being more thoroughly undertaken in the chapters explicitly concerned with globalisation further into the thesis. This is because not all the categories are relevant to my own explicit interests, and therefore a discussion here would be preemptive.

Modes of operation of ideology. *Table taken from Thompson, 1990, op.cit., p.60.*

<i>General Modes</i>	<i>Some typical strategies of symbolic construction</i>
Legitimation	Rationalization
	Universalization
	Narrativization
Dissimulation	Displacement
	Euphemization

<sup>96</sup> This is what Anthony Giddens refers to as the 'double hermeneutic'. See Anthony Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

	Trope (e.g. synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor)
Unification	Standardization
	Symbolization of unity
Fragmentation	Differentiation
	Expurgation of the other
Reification	Naturalization
	Eternalization
	Nominalization/passivization

The first *modus operandi* listed in the table refers to *Legitimation*. Legitimation in this context refers to the ways in which 'relations of domination' are portrayed as "just and worthy of support".<sup>97</sup> There are a number of associated strategies of symbolic construction that fall into this category: *rationalization*, which is the process of reasoning adopted to justify or defend these relations; *universalization*, which persuades people by positing that "institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some individuals serve the interests of all", each and all having equal access to succeed through them; and finally, *narrativization*, in which traditions are invented and histories 'written' which have the effect of binding groups, through stories of common pasts and shared destinies "which transcends the experience of conflict, difference and division".<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.60.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp61-62.

As an example as to the relevance of this to my thesis objectives, one question in this context would be: how does 'globalisation' function, in given circumstances, to legitimate a position, and can we identify the means whereby this is done and interpret it as ideological? Are there a set of circumstances that give rise to the need for, and explain why, someone like Blair would proffer a particular understanding. For example, within the New Labour discourse, can we perceive the strategy of *universalisation* in the context of arguing for a particular understanding of globalisation. Is Blair, via a strategy of universalisation, able to then convince people that globalisation (selectively understood) meets the interests of all people (a questionable assumption), and might there be a reason for this that goes undisclosed?

The second, *Dissimulation* refers to the manner in which "relations of domination may be established and sustained by being concealed, denied or obscured".<sup>99</sup> *Displacement* refers to when either positive or negative features associated with an object or agent are displaced onto another. Another associated strategy, *euphemization*, occurs where "actions, institutions or social relations are described or redescribed in terms which elicit a positive connotation".<sup>100</sup> Finally, trope concerns the way in which language is used 'figuratively'. The figurative use of language includes 'metonymy' (e.g., the state acts), 'synecdoche' (e.g., the British position on embargoes *read* the British government's position), and metaphor.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p.62.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.62.

*Unification* as a *modus operandi* concerns how a sense of unity, regardless of actual division or difference is established and sustained at the symbolic level. *Standardization* concerns how "[s]ymbolic forms are adapted to a standard framework which is promoted as the shared and acceptable basis of symbolic exchange".<sup>101</sup> In addition, and related is the *symbolization of unity*, in which symbols such as national flags are adopted in order to construct a sense of unity.

Fragmentation, as a fourth *modus operandi* of ideology denotes how "[r]elations of domination may be maintained, not by unifying individuals in a collectivity, but by fragmenting those individuals and groups that might be capable of mounting an effective challenge to dominant groups, or by orientating forces of potential opposition towards a target which is projected as evil, harmful or threatening".<sup>102</sup> *Differentiation* and *expurgation of the other* are two associated strategies in this context, the latter referring to the sense in which an enemy or threat is created, requiring challenging the existing relations of domination.<sup>103</sup>

The final *modus operandi* listed is reification. This refers to when "relations of domination may be established and sustained by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time".<sup>104</sup> This has the effect of obscuring the essentially historical character of the social world; *naturalization* assumes that such events are in some way natural, that such outcomes are inevitable and

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.65.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

ineluctable as a result of their 'natural characteristics'. *Eternalization* denies the social-historical character through the portrayal of events as "permanent, unchanging and everrecurring".<sup>105</sup> *Nominalization* refers to when identifiable agency is 'erased' so to speak, replaced with the use of a noun, "as when we say 'the banning of imports' instead of 'the Prime Minister has decided to ban imports'".<sup>106</sup> *Passivization* refers to the rendering of verbs into the passive form, for example, instead of saying that 'immigration officers are currently interviewing the asylum seeker', one instead says 'the asylum seeker is currently being interviewed'. Taken together, these *modus operandi* form an impressive set of categories for thinking about the interaction of meaning and power.

So, each of the above *modus operandi* point to instances in which meaning may be said to have been mobilised in the service of power. That this is so however, draws on the need to locate each of these strategies within concrete circumstances, and to take a critical stance vis-à-vis this backdrop. Thus, the interpretation of ideology (here understood as a version of the depth hermeneutical procedure), necessitates three 'phases': social-historical analysis; formal or discursive analysis; and finally, beyond this, "it puts forward an interpretation, a creative and synthetic proposition, concerning the interrelations between meaning and power".<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.320.

In this chapter I have articulated an approach to the study of ideology. This approach argues for a particular account of ideology that is more sensitive, at the philosophical level, to the insights of hermeneutics. The epistemological insights of a hermeneutic approach, it is argued, mean that certain conceptualisations of ideology have now been rendered redundant. This nonetheless does not invalidate the term. Instead, in retaining a critical dimension to the concept of ideology, one ought to refer to a more nuanced set of strategies geared to identifying ‘meaning in the service of power’. These ‘strategies’ are part of what constitute the method of ‘depth hermeneutics’, which I take from the work of John Thompson. Three phases are identified in this respect, reflecting a concern with social-historical analysis, discursive or formal analysis, and an ‘interpretation’ which brings the two together. This latter concern may be referred to as dennoting a critical (re)interpretation, sensitive to the interrelations of meaning and power.

The subsequent chapters will now reflect the orientation staked in this chapter. In this respect, any subsequent analysis must eschew a complete reliance on a positivist approach to understanding globalisation. This means that ultimately, ‘globalisation’ is ‘real’ only in the sense that it is made real by the ongoing interpretations of social actors. As the understanding of globalisation alters, then so will the ‘reality’ reflect this alteration. What follows from this is that assessing the significance of ‘globalisation’ will entail more than simply judging whether it is empirically tenable. In addition, considerations of meaning and power take on a new significance. Thus, with the aid of certain *modus operandi* outlined above, and following an analysis of what the term is not (empirically), we are in a position to offer a ‘deeper’ explanation on the significance of

the term that follows from a set of assumptions underlying the motives of New Labour in power.

In line with this argument, I now turn to the next chapter, which concerns itself with critically examining the globalisation literature. This will provide an important starting point for first critiquing the formal elements concerning globalisation in the New Labour discourse, something that is necessary if we are to then develop the critique at a more ideological level.

# Chapter 3

## Understanding Globalisation

### Introduction

As Holton comments, “globalization has, over the past decade, become a major feature of commentaries on contemporary social life”.<sup>1</sup> These commentaries have resulted in a number of strong positions being posited concerning the nature of the contemporary world and how to succeed in it. According to Giddens, globalisation should now be given “[a] key place in the lexicon of the social sciences”.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I question how useful the concept of ‘globalisation’ is, suggesting that in its various forms it is a concept that tends to obscure rather than clarify. In critically examining the literature, I concentrate on that understanding of globalisation generally found in the New Labour discourse, one that corresponds with initial views of globalisation.

I begin by examining the various approaches to globalisation. These are commonly divided up in to ‘two waves’ of thinking. The first wave refers to an initial ‘strong thesis’. This in turn gives rise to a ‘second wave’ of thinking that encompasses a sceptical response and a set of more ‘complex’ theories of globalisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Holton, Globalization and the Nation-State, (London: MacMillan Press 1998), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p.52.

In critiquing the first wave, I focus on one exemplary writer most firmly associated with the strong thesis, Keneiche Ohmae.<sup>3</sup> This understanding, I suggest, has until recently constituted a ‘hegemonic view’, in that it is this understanding that most people hold to when evoking the term.<sup>4</sup> I will examine his approach and allude to a number of problems. This will involve a consideration of the criticisms of certain ‘sceptics’ like Hirst and Thompson, who in criticising Ohmae and others associated with the strong thesis, develop an ideal typology of what globalisation must be.

I then turn to an examination of more ‘complex’ theories of globalisation, and in particular the work of Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton.<sup>5</sup> This work, it will be seen, marks a considerable evolution in thinking, offering a more sophisticated explanation of globalisation and its consequences. In articulating a more sophisticated account, they shed further light upon some of the major inadequacies contained in the strong globalisation thesis, as well as drawing attention to some limits to be found in the sceptical account. In addition I also refer to the work of Jan Aart Scholte, who usefully draws attention to the synonymous use of globalisation with other processes, such as globalisation as liberalisation, internationalisation, and westernisation.<sup>6</sup> This will allow me to draw out some of the underlying presumptions and disciplinary consequences of adopting ‘globalisation’ as a means of analysis. Taken together, this ‘second wave’ of thinking on globalisation constitutes a formidable challenge to the strong thesis, which I suggest closely parallels the New Labour understanding.

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<sup>3</sup> Keneiche Ohmae, The Borderless World : Power and Strategy In the Interlinked Economy, (London: Collins, 1990). Keneiche Ohmae, The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of the Regional Economies, (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> See Stephen Gill, ‘Globalisation, Market Civilisation and Disciplinary Neo-Liberalism’, in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol 24, No.3, 1995, pp399-423.

Finally, I will concentrate on the limitations of each approach by taking a critical hermeneutic perspective. This latter perspective will stress the need for a non-positivistic dimension to be present in any examination of globalisation stressing the importance of 'who holds to what interpretation', and in 'what circumstances'. This dimension, largely ignored, refers to the importance of the interpretation of globalisation. In arguing for the importance of the idea, I will draw upon the analysis contained in chapter two, and sketch out what a critical hermeneutical approach to understanding globalisation entails. On this latter view, additional questions arise, for example, which actors think it real, and what kind of understanding do they hold too? What power do they have in order to act upon their understanding and with what consequences?<sup>7</sup> What this highlights, is the need for an alternative technique for assessing the significance of globalisation, one that is sensitive to the ways in which its meaning (judged for example in terms of its implications) serves to sustain 'relations of domination'.

In summary, in this chapter I question the explanatory utility of globalisation, particularly as it was initially understood. I draw attention to a number of serious limitations to this view. In referring to a second wave of literature on the topic, I highlight how this hegemonic view is both untenable and undesirable: untenable, in that it is empirically unsustainable; undesirable, in that it obfuscates rather than clarifies, 'disciplining' how we understand the plural changes currently underway.

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<sup>5</sup> David Held, Andrew McGrew, David Goldblatt, & Jonathon Perraton, Global Transformation: Politics, Economics and Culture, (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, Globalization: A Critical Introduction, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Gray argues that "a strong political culture (France, Japan) has asserted itself successfully against the supposedly irresistible forces of globalisation". John Gray, *The Guardian*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1994, p.18.

Such a view ‘silences’ an alternative interpretation of the significance of globalisation that might instead stress its ideological uses.

#### Keneiche Ohmae and the Strong Globalisation Thesis.

As Hay and Watson observe, “ideas do not simply appear from thin air. At all times they are embedded within, and conditioned by, the wider social formation of which they are themselves a part”.<sup>8</sup> So it is with globalisation. Contrary to the view of Giddens, it is simply not correct to think that the “global spread of the term” could “come from *nowhere* to be almost everywhere”.<sup>9</sup> Globalisation is first and foremost an idea, latterly a theory, one that has been loaded from the start; it is not possible that it can come from ‘nowhere’.

As a theory, globalisation gained currency most significantly in the economic realm. This continues to be the case. Refer to a newspaper, listen to a politician, and almost invariably globalisation will be discussed in terms of economics. To most people, globalisation refers to a process of global integration, driven, in the main by *economic* forces.<sup>10</sup> Thus reflecting the climate of opinion most dominant in economic and business circles (that of neo-liberalism), ‘globalisation’ generally understood, in many respects simply refers to ‘liberalisation’. All subsequent talk of ‘globalisation’ in the more academic literature has not to date significantly altered this general view.

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<sup>8</sup> Colin Hay & Mathew Watson, ‘Globalisation: ‘Sceptical’ notes on the 1999 Reith Lectures’, *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No.4, 1999, p.419.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Giddens, 1999 Reith Lectures: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99.htm), p.1, emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> For example see the Economist’s special report on globalisation, ‘Is it at Risk?’, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2002, pp. 61-63. The article states that, “[f]or the first time in the modern era of global integration, the world’s biggest economies (and many emerging ones) have stalled at the same time. As a result, the principal measures of economic integration, cross-border flows of goods and capital, showed no

However, it is of course more than this. Though globalisation and liberalisation are often conflated, those that refer to globalisation often believe it to be something more profound and far reaching. While liberalisation connotes a more specific process, globalisation suggests something more significant, obscure, and yet irresistible. I now turn to what is often referred to as the ‘strong thesis’ of globalisation, a view that constitutes the ‘first wave’ of thinking about globalisation. It is this view that most people have in mind when referring to globalisation, and it is this view which most obviously displays many of the hallmarks of the times in which it rose to prominence.

The ‘strong’ globalisation thesis encompasses all social ‘realms’, the economic, political and cultural. Economically, the world increasingly approximates a single global economy, with a tendency towards price ‘equalisation’. Politically, the nation-state is conceived of as less sovereign and increasingly anachronistic.<sup>11</sup> Culturally, it is posited that the world is becoming increasingly homogenous, as more and more people draw upon the same set of symbolic references to derive meaning.<sup>12</sup> Each of these developments, it is assumed, is in large part explained as the outcome of the process of globalisation. According to Dicken, in essence the strong view asserts that:

[w]e live... in a globalized world in which nation-states are no longer significant actors or meaningful economic units; in which consumer tastes and cultures are homogenized and satisfied through the provision of standardized global products created by global corporations with no allegiance to place or community.<sup>13</sup>

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advance last year”. The article asks the question, “[d]oes all this, as some argue, pose a threat to the liberal international order- that is, to globalisation?”.

<sup>11</sup> Richard O’Brien, Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992), p.1.

<sup>12</sup> B. Barber, ‘Jihad Vs. McWorld’, *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1992, pp.53-65.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Dicken, Global Shift: Transforming the World Economy, 3<sup>rd</sup> addition), (London: Paul Chapman Press, 1998), p.3.

This understanding is echoed by Held, Goldblatt, Perraton and McGrew, who associate the strong globalisation thesis as being “primarily an economic phenomenon”, that assumes an increasingly integrated global economy”, in which “global capital impose[s] a neoliberal economic discipline on all governments such that politics is no longer the ‘art of the possible’ but rather the practice of ‘sound economic management.’”<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the most influential of writers associated with the strong account, certainly the most oft quoted, is Keneiche Ohmae.<sup>15</sup> Ohmae’s view has come to signify the classic statement on the significance of globalisation as understood in its strong version.

Ohmae starts from the premise that we now live in a “genuinely global economy”.<sup>16</sup> This is not something in the process of being formed but rather is something that already exists.<sup>17</sup> Examining the relatively unimpeded flows of what he refers to as the four ‘I’s’; industry, investment, individual consumers and information, can evidence its existence. From this premise Ohmae derives a number of conclusions about the cultural and political realm, which unfold according to a kind of “global logic”.<sup>18</sup> In the political realm, Ohmae argues that traditional nation states, as a result of the development of a global economy “have become unnatural, even impossible

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<sup>14</sup> Held et. al., *Global Transformations*, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Other prominent writers associated with this approach include Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Richard Barnet & John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); T. Levitt, ‘The Globalisation of Markets’, *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 101; Jeffrey D. Sachs, & Andrew Warner, ‘Economic Reform and the Process of Global Intergration’, *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1995, Vol.1., pp1-118.

<sup>16</sup> Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, op.cit., p16.

<sup>17</sup> This contention is certainly not unique to Ohmae, nor was he the first to make it. See Peter Drucker, ‘The Changed World Economy’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.64, No.4, 1986, p.768.

<sup>18</sup> Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, op.cit., p.81.

business units".<sup>19</sup> As a result, according to Ohmae, 'political borders' have turned into "largely meaningless lines on economic maps".<sup>20</sup>

As this global logic unfolds, the state is confronted by an increasingly limited array of options in order to 'succeed'. Ohmae presents the case as if the logic of the 'new global economy' necessarily dissolves the nation state, with change being presented as inevitable. Little else can be done short of remaining entirely isolated:

[b]eing able to take advantage of the global system means making internal changes to harness its resources and expertise, and these changes, in turn, require a degree of local freedom of action that inevitably collides with a determination to retain firm political control at the centre.<sup>21</sup>

[a]s the creation of a much earlier stage of industrial history, it [the nation state] has neither the will nor the incentive nor the credibility nor the tools nor the political base to play an effective role in a genuinely borderless economy.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, a set of imperatives are writ into Ohmae's account. The new global economy determines these imperatives, which are presented as existing 'out there', independently of any single state or agent. To not act according to this 'global logic' will "scare away" the global economy, though presumably only temporarily, as such a position cannot be sustained.<sup>23</sup> This is particularly the case for democracies, as the 'political base' (individual consumers), will not tolerate anything else; their interests lie elsewhere.

A few words should be said about this 'global logic'. What Ohmae has in mind is something in line with Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' metaphor. It is the logic of the market as interpreted by classical and neo-classical economics, working within the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.42.

Anglo-Saxon liberal economic tradition, and shorn of its domestic confines. In the competitive setting of a ‘market’, certain outcomes are presented as desirable and inevitable (and therefore predictable) as the result of the interplay of utility maximising individuals and profit maximising firms. A tendency to certain equilibrium outcomes prevails thanks to the operation of the price mechanism. These outcomes are efficient, provided that the state keeps its interventions to a minimum.<sup>24</sup>

Ohmae’s work represents a classical statement on the nature of a ‘global logic’ understood in neo-liberal economic terms. Moreover, in as much as this is how globalisation is understood, it also represents a classical statement on the significance of globalisation. According to Ohmae, the nation state can no longer productively intervene due to the spatial limitations that it implies. This is not surprising, as for Ohmae, it has only been a transitional feature of the global system. Ricardo Petrella builds upon this orientation and global logic, spelling it out in a somewhat more cynical manner:

“Thou shalt globalise. Thou shalt incessantly strive for technological innovation. Thou shalt drive thy competitors out of business, since otherwise they’ll do it to you. Thou shalt not countenance state intervention in economic life. Thou shalt privatise.”<sup>25</sup>

This captures the essence of what is understood to be the necessary response to the consequences of globalisation. It takes the form of a rational blueprint of logical

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, differences prevail between advocates of neo-liberalism, not least concerning the ability of the market to provide ‘public’ and ‘merit’ goods. Even so, a neo-liberal view holds that any inability on the part of the market to provide such goods, does not qualify as a fundamental challenge to the core position.

<sup>25</sup> Ricardo Petrella, ‘Les Nouvelles Tables de la loi’, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1995. Quoted in Robert Went, *Globalization: Neo-Liberal Challenge, Radical Responses*, (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p.2.

responsive measures that exclude any alternative.<sup>26</sup> It is contained in a whole host of writings on globalisation, such as Thomas Friedman's best selling account of globalisation, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*.<sup>27</sup> For Friedman, this global logic is dubbed the 'golden straightjacket'.

Hence the 'strong thesis' begins on the basis of arguing that a global economy is already in existence. Accordingly, a new constellation of imperatives and opportunities arise that are derived from an economic focus. In this new 'borderless world', states become 'dysfunctional'. Consequently, they should devolve power; should they not, then short of remaining entirely isolated, they will be compelled to do so by an inexorable 'global logic'. As a unit that hinders the attainment of the good life, the nation state is viewed with a mixture of scepticism and disapproval. As an agent of change in the new global system, it is no longer relevant, and its options are increasingly circumscribed. According to this view of globalisation, the issues are black and white, open up and benefit, or remain wedded to a dated 'national interest' and suffer the consequences.

The strong thesis is not just concerned with the economic and political realm, but also the cultural realm. Essentially, the view is that globalisation is giving rise to an increasingly homogenous global culture. For Friedman, "because this phenomenon we call 'globalization' - the integration of markets, trade, finance, information and corporate ownership around the globe - is actually a very American phenomenon: it

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<sup>26</sup> On this global logic see also Paul Hirst, From Statism to Pluralism: Democracy, Civil Society and Global Politics, (London: University College London Press, 1997), pp207-208; Ramesh Mishra, Globalization and the Welfare State, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1999), p.15.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalisation, (London: Harper Collins, 2000).

wears Mickey Mouse ears, eats Big Macs, drinks Coke".<sup>28</sup> Ohmae himself, refers to this as a process of 'California-ization':

Consumers around the world are beginning to develop similar cultural expectations about what they ought to be able to buy as well as about what it is they want to buy... this process of convergence, which I have described elsewhere as the 'california-ization' of taste and preference, is making today's 'global' consumers more like each other in many respects than they are like either their non globally oriented neighbours or their parents or grandparents.<sup>29</sup>

However, Ohmae is to an extent ambivalent about the nature of this convergence. Recognising that consumer tastes and preferences are not the sum of what goes up to make culture Ohmae suggests that they in fact tend to "overlay new tastes on an established, but largely unaffected, base of social norms and values. It adds new elements to the local mix of goods and services, but leaves the worldview of the people who purchase them unchanged".<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, he concludes that, that said, "even social borders are starting to give way". For Ohmae, "multi-media experiences... have consequences that go far beyond surface issues of taste... to fundamental issues of thought process and mind set".<sup>31</sup> Those places that are exposed to media influences are therefore the very places in which cultural convergence, more profoundly understood, is underway. Ohmae, by way of an example, examines the cleavages that have developed between the generations in Japanese society, culminating in the most recent 'nintendo' generation, who more closely resemble their Western peers than their elders.

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Friedman, 'Big Macs II', *New York Times*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1996, A27. Quoted in John. D. Kelly, 'Time and the Global: Against the Homogenous, Empty Communities in Contemporary Social Theory', in Brigit Meyer & Peter Geschiere, (eds.), *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p.239.

<sup>29</sup> Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, op.cit., p.28.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.29-30.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.30.

### Challenging the Strong Thesis: The Sceptics

The account above, in many ways expresses the understanding of globalisation that most people adhere to, or at least have in mind when others refer to it. It is moreover, an account that shares in common many features to be found in the New Labour version. Therefore, in this next section I turn to the subsequent globalisation literature that questions this view. I begin by examining the ‘sceptical’ position.

There are a number of writers classified as ‘sceptics’, though they are by no means all sceptical about the same thing.<sup>32</sup> However, as with the strong thesis, the sceptical accounts generally focus on the economic dimension of globalisation. They are thus sceptical about the idea of a globalised world economy, and the view of globalisation that rests upon this premise. The most celebrated account associated with the sceptical approach is that of Hirst and Thompson.

For Hirst and Thompson, globalisation is in fact largely a myth. It is a myth nonetheless, that is widespread, providing justification for a raft of highly significant policy measures. As such it is a myth that needs to be challenged. Their understanding of this view, is as follows:

A truly global economy has emerged or is emerging in which distinct ‘national’ economies and, therefore, domestic strategies of national economic management are increasingly irrelevant. The world economy has internationalized in its basic dynamics, is dominated by uncontrollable global market forces, and has as its principal actors and major agents of change truly transnational corporations (TNCs), which owe a allegiance to no nation state and locate wherever in the globe market advantage dictates.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See Hay & Watson, *Globalisation: ‘Sceptical’ Notes*, op.cit.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance, First Edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p.195.

In offering an alternative understanding of globalisation, they begin by questioning whether in fact “we are either firmly within a globalizing economy, or that the present era is one in which there are strong globalizing tendencies”.<sup>34</sup> In order to show that this might not be the case they first take issue with the idea that the degree of integration of the international economy is without precedent.

According to Hirst and Thompson, in certain respects, “the current international economy is *less* open and integrated than the regime that prevailed from 1870 to 1914”.<sup>35</sup> By comparing the ratio of merchandise trade to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices, Hirst and Thompson find that in fact:

Trade to GDP ratios were consistently higher in 1913 than they were in 1977 (with the slight exception of Germany where they were near enough equal). Even in 1995, Japan, the Netherlands and the UK were still less open. The US was the only country that was considerably more open than it was in 1913.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, Hirst and Thompson examine the ratio of current account balance to Gross National Product (GNP), as a gauge of financial openness. Citing the research of Lewis, and Turner and Howell, they found that international capital flows were at their highest in 1913 (5.9%) falling to around 1.6% in 1970, and by 1992 rising to around 3%.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p.13. See also Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, ‘The Problem of ‘Globalization’: International Economic Relations, National Economic Management and the Formation of Trading Blocs’, *Economy and Society*, Vol.24, 1995, p.394.

<sup>35</sup> Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, op.cit., p.2. Emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.27. See also their appendix to this chapter. This deals with some of the economic problems involved in comparing trade to GDP in terms of constant prices. Though recognising the difficulties they nonetheless still conclude that their methodology is preferable as it “has the advantage of continuity, and it expresses the way the *total* economy is or is not being integrated into the international system.” P.65.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.28. See also Arthur Lewis, ‘The Rate of Growth of World Trade’, in Sven Grassman & Erik Lundberg (eds.), *The World Economic Order: Past and Prospects*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1981), pp11-74; Philip Turner, ‘Capital Flows in the 1980s: A Survey of Major Trends’, *BIS Economic Papers*, No.30, Bank for International Settlements, Geneva, 1991; M. Howel, ‘Asia’s Victorian

Finally, in examining the flow of labour, that is ‘international migration’, Hirst and Thompson found that at the current historical juncture this was limited, and far less than in previous periods, particularly when compared to the end of the nineteenth century, with only a few opportunities for movement remaining for the relatively skilled; “[d]uring the nineteenth century the mass movement of workers to the sources of capital was accepted and encouraged; now it is rejected except as a temporary expedient”.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Hirst and Thompson turn their attention to two other widely held views associated with globalisation, concerning Foreign Direct Investment flows, and the impact of the relatively footloose modern transnational corporation. Contrary to popular belief, Hirst and Thompson argue that genuinely transnational companies are in fact quite rare. What is more, most companies remain nationally based, with little evidence of any trend towards the development of more transnationals. Examining the patterns of production, they found “that between 65 and 70 per cent of MNC value-added continues to be produced on home territory”.<sup>39</sup> More, citing evidence produced by Thompson, they conclude that to date “MNCs still rely on their ‘home base’ as the centre for their economic activities...we should be reasonably confident that, in the aggregate, international companies are still predominantly MNCs (with a clear home base to their operations) and not TNCs”.<sup>40</sup> Such a position is also backed

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Financial Crisis’, paper presented at the Conference on the East Asian Economic Crisis, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, 13-14<sup>th</sup> July 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, op.cit., p.29.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.84

by Dicken<sup>41</sup>. It is also confirmed by the research findings of Ruigrok and Van Tulder, who conclude that:

of the largest one hundred core firms in the world, not one is firmly 'global', 'footloose' or 'borderless'. There is however a hierarchy in the internationalisation of functional areas of management; around forty firms generate at least half of their sales abroad; with few exceptions, executive boards and management styles remain solidly national in their outlook; with even fewer exceptions, R&D remains firmly under domestic control; and most companies appear to think of a globalisation of corporate finances as too uncertain.<sup>42</sup>

As Hirst and Thompson point out "it is multinational companies (MNCs) that are the agents responsible for FDI [foreign direct investment]".<sup>43</sup> Again, in examining the pattern and impact of these flows a number of counter claims vis-à-vis the strong globalisation thesis are made. Though rates of foreign direct investment (FDI) are high, these flows are largely concentrated within the 'triad' of the European Union, Japan and the United States, where "[s]ixty per cent of the flows of FDI over the period 1991-6 were between just the members of the Triad bloc, which also accounted for 75 per cent of the total accumulated stock of FDI in 1995".<sup>44</sup> What is more, in that FDI figures still count for on average only ten per cent of GDP, it is suggested that the profundity of these flows is overly exaggerated.

A scepticism about the historically unprecedented nature of the so-called global economy is a view not only held by Hirst and Thompson. For example, Gordon

<sup>41</sup> See Dicken, *Global Shift*, op.cit., p193. See also John M. Stopford & Susan Strange, *Rival States, Rival Firms: Competition for World Market Shares*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1991), p.121. Y-S Hu, 'Global Firms are National firms with International Operations', *California Management Review*, Vol.34, pp. 107-126. Both quoted in Dicken, *The Global Shift*, op.cit., p.193.

<sup>42</sup> Winfried Ruigrok & Rob Van Tulder, *The Logic of International Restructuring*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.159.

<sup>43</sup> Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, op.cit., p.66.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp70-71. It should be noted, as Hirst and Thompson point out, this is a highly difficult area to measure, with differing ways of calculating FDI figures. They conclude that on the whole, and given certain problems, "the FDI measure is likely to overestimate 'activity conducted abroad'". See pp76-84.

argues that “we have not witnessed movement toward an increasingly ‘open’ international economy.”<sup>45</sup> Distinguishing between short-term and long-term (productive) capital flows, he argues that we have “witnessed declining rather than increasing mobility of productive capital”.<sup>46</sup> Such a view is backed by Glyn and Sutcliffe, who argue that the current phase of integration “is still very far from a globally integrated economy...In many ways it is less globalized than 100 years ago”.<sup>47</sup>

The above conclusions, allow Hirst and Thompson to develop their argument at a more theoretical level. In challenging both the novelty of contemporary integration, as well as the degree and direction of integration, (in other words, based on the assumption shared by the strong thesis that first and foremost globalisation denotes the process that leads to a truly ‘globalised economy’) Hirst and Thompson believe that it is possible to dismiss many claims about the significance of globalisation. On this basis, a number of subsequent claims then follow.

Firstly, Hirst and Thompson dismiss the idea that the nation-state is increasingly powerless and dysfunctional in light of the so called changes associated with globalisation. They argue that the G3 retain the capacity to regulate and control global markets. This suggests that certain countries can exert “powerful governance pressures” for the good should they so choose.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, in emphasising the continued central import of governance measures, Hirst and Thompson challenge the

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<sup>45</sup> David Gordon, ‘The Global Economy: New Edifice or Crumbling Foundations?’, *New Left Review*, March-April 1998, Vol.68, p.63.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Glyn & Bob Sutcliffe, ‘Global but Leaderless? The New Capitalist Order’, in Ralph Miliband & Leo Panitch, (eds.), New World Order: The Socialist Register, (Merlin Press: London,

view that agency is precluded as the result of any ineluctable ‘global logic’. Should they wish too, governments (not just of the G3) can set in motion an agenda that strengthens its position by controlling the shape that the future takes.

Taken together, the arguments of Hirst and Thompson and other sceptics form a convincing alternative to the view associated with the likes of Ohmae. Principal amongst their contributions to the debate is the compelling evidence they evoke which dismisses the presumption that there exists a ‘global economy’ of the nature articulated by Ohmae. Additionally, they also refute the claim of their being a certain ‘global logic’, with all that that entails. Influential from its publication, the work of Hirst and Thompson effectively shifts the terms of the debate and in doing so reintroduces an important role for the state. It also renders unsatisfactory any talk of inevitability or impotency on the part of ‘G3’ and other governments, re-introducing the importance of governance measures and state sovereignty in affecting and determining outcomes. As a result, it constitutes an important rearguard argument for those on the left, suspicious of the consequences of globalisation.

Given that there is no borderless economy, the sceptical approach also effectively questions the idea that the state is ‘dysfunctional’. The metaphor of dysfunctionality is given meaning because Ohmae refers to the state as an economic agent. However, even if this is accepted, Rodrik and Evans have in fact demonstrated a positive correlation between social expenditure, a gauge of state intervention, and openness

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1992), p.91. See also Robert Gilpin, The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the Twenty-first Century, (Princeton University Press: Chichester, 2000), p.323.

<sup>48</sup> Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization in Question 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, op.cit., p.2.

and competitive advantage, citing the example of Sweden.<sup>49</sup> This suggests a positive role for the state in the context of a global economy, provided that the nature of the intervention is geared towards competitiveness.

The postulate that the new global economy impresses upon the state an increasingly circumscribed menu of options has been contested by a number of authors in addition to Hirst and Thompson. As a result, the simplistic view associated with the strong thesis - that stressed that one either pursue a policy of openness and deregulation, (which in turn leads to convergence of policy), or pursue a policy that posits closure - can been dismissed. The counter argument stresses that this binary division in fact masks an array of options, which is augmented in complexity once it is recognised that different state capacities and different types of capitalism coexist simultaneously.<sup>50</sup>

For example, Berger, Dore, and Weiss all stress the variation in policy responses and options.<sup>51</sup> For Weiss this is unsurprising considering the variety in 'state capacity'.<sup>52</sup> Weiss argues that 'domestic institutional capacity' is highly significant, and varies from state to state.<sup>53</sup> In stressing the non-similar features of the 'nation state', Weiss takes issue with the idea that globalisation confronts the state with a set of "stark

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<sup>49</sup> Dani Rodrik, Has Globalization Gone to Far? (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1997), p.6. See also Peter Evans, 'The Eclipse of the State? Reflections on Stateness in an Era of Globalization', *World Politics*, 50 (1), Oct 1997, pp62-87.

<sup>50</sup> See Stephen Driver & Luke Martell, New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp49-51.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Weiss, 'Managed Openness: Beyond Neoliberal Globalism', *New Left Review*, Number 239, November/December 1999, pp126-140. Linda Weiss, 'Globalization and National Governance: Antinomy or Interdependence?', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.5, December, 1999, pp. 1-30. See also David Baker, Gerald Epstein & Robert Pollin, (eds.), Globalization and Progressive Economic Policy, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge); Suzanne Berger & Ronald Dore, (eds.), National Diversity and Global Capitalism, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>52</sup> Weiss, L. Managed Openness, op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.128.

options".<sup>54</sup> She argues that, "between the extremes of passivity and closure that have attracted most attention lies a substantial area for analysis, institutional reform, and policy action".<sup>55</sup> Weiss posits that "globalisation as a relentless force 'out there' pushing one-directional change 'in here' is therefore misconstrued, if not utopian".<sup>56</sup> This is in stark contrast to Ohmae, who discusses a set of imperatives that exist as a result of the new global economy (conceived of as something that exists 'out there').

Hence, in addition to the scepticism about the existence of a global economy, the second wave of sceptical literature also takes issue with the simplistic status and role accorded to the state. Taken together, this set of arguments provides a robust counter to some of the assertions to be found in the work of Ohmae and others associated with the strong thesis.

Nonetheless, and for a number of reasons, the sceptical literature does not succeed in dealing a deathblow to 'globalisation'. To begin with, the strong thesis embodied in the work of Ohmae counts only for the 'first wave' of globalisation thinking. The sceptical critique offered by the likes of Hirst and Thompson challenges this first wave, but by and large, it does not deal with the alternative strand of 'second wave' thinking.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, the first wave was less concerned about articulating a theory of globalisation than describing a state of affairs that came to be associated with a phenomenon labelled globalisation. On this view, the label is in a sense inadvertent. For example the term globalisation does not in fact figure largely in the work of Ohmae. Where it is evoked the term is generally used as a synonym denoting the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.129.

<sup>57</sup> In fact, this is explicitly recognised by Hirst and Thompson in their second edition.

spread of something; generally the globalisation of markets, but it does not in itself explain anything.

However, this does not diminish the significance of the sceptical critique. This is because the sceptical critique challenges a pervasive and widely held common sensical view of globalisation. This common sense understanding, as embodied in Ohmae's work, has a number of features. One feature that defines this 'common sense' approach to globalisation is that it refers to the *global spread of something*. Thus when Ohmae does refer to globalisation, he usually means the spread of the market. Additionally, it could mean the spread of a product, an idea and so on. A second feature of this common sense understanding posits a global logic at work. This global logic is understood *in neo-liberal terms*. This forms the disciplinary backdrop to the way the topic is then approached. Hence economics and politics are separated in such a way that the economic is considered fundamental, and the political relegated to a managerial role, one that limits itself to a concern with providing certain 'public' and 'merit' goods.

The consequences of thinking in these terms points to a third key feature of the common sense understanding of globalisation. This refers to the assumption that it already exists '*out there*', so to speak, as a 'thing in itself'.<sup>58</sup> This in turn generates a discourse that leads to a particular programme concerning how one should *respond* to 'it'. This gives rise to assumptions about globalisation as being natural and ineluctable. It also allows for a clear distinction to be made between the state and globalisation, as if the former did not in part constitute and reproduce aspects of what

are then perceived to be understood as evidence of the existence of the latter (understood *in abstracto*).<sup>59</sup>

That Hirst and Thompson are critical of the understanding of globalisation as associated with the ‘strong version’ of the thesis of economic globalisation should then, not be taken to mean that they are critical of ‘globalisation theory’ *tout court*. This label is unsatisfactory. The former approach is generally concerned with describing a particular state of affairs, and not so concerned with arriving at a robust and parsimonious theory of globalisation. In the work of Ohmae it is the operation and logic of the market that explains the contemporary situation, not something called globalisation.

Given this, is it valid to even talk of a strong thesis of globalisation? The answer is probably a qualified yes. The classification schema in part derives from the second wave, which cobbles together a mixture of approaches, developments and processes which are subsequently labelled as a strong thesis. Those initial writers subsequently classified in this category probably did not see themselves in this light when writing. As I have argued, for Ohmae ‘globalisation’ was not attempting to explain anything in this phase, rather it was being explained. Hence in the first wave globalisation operated more as *explanandum* and not as *explanans*. It was used more as a label associated with a period of change that derived from the business and economic literature. It is the second wave that posits an explanatory role in the globalisation discourse. Unfortunately the so-called ‘strong thesis’ is what is then concentrated on

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<sup>58</sup> See John Maclean, ‘Philosophical Roots of Globalization and Philosophical Routes to Globalization’, in Randall Germain, (ed.), Globalisation and its Critics, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000), p.10.

by the second wave, at the price of ignoring any particular author who is associated with the approach. Thus Ohmae or Reich are rarely tackled head on, but rather dismissively subsumed within this caricatured category and questioned in terms of their so called shared features; cultural homogenisation, death of the state, rise of the trans-national corporation.

In as much as this is done, the position is reified, and its complexity and variety is overlooked. For example there is no reason to assume that the various authors writing about the 'homogenisation of cultures' see themselves as connected to those who discuss the demise of the nation-state, or necessarily would lead to conclude such a position as a logical necessity flowing from their argument. When Ohmae examines the 'cultural realm', he considers consumers, tastes etc., in an increasingly open global market. As such, he conducts his discussion according to the assumptions and ontology of a neo-classical liberal economist. Ohmae makes a judgment on the degree of cultural convergence based on an ontological assumption that the world consists of rationally self-interested individuals who attempt to maximise their utility; in other words keen to enjoy the fruits of a market offering relatively similar consumer goods. Though he is led to make a strong subsequent claim about cultural convergence, this again is explained, in Ohmae's case, in terms of changing technology and increased access to information, mediated through the mass media. Therefore, the process is attributed not to globalisation, but an explicit number of alternative factors. Therefore, any lack of rigor or naïveté follows, not from sloppy thought, but rather because little weight is given to the concept globalisation.

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<sup>59</sup> See Ian Clark, Globalisation and International Relations Theory, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapters 1-3.

That said though, one can still argue for a ‘qualified yes’ as to whether a strong thesis of globalisation is a valid category. This is because it does have a widespread currency in the minds of people as well as the media. Such a view holds a strong sway on the imagination of the public. It therefore shouldn’t be inferred that the work of Hirst and Thompson is invalid. Their work should be seen as not a critique of globalisation theory proper, but rather a critique of some of the common sense assertions often associated with what is understood as globalisation. In that sense it is probably more valuable than if it was a critique of globalisation theory.

The distinction between globalisation theory and the strong thesis is therefore important. What Hirst and Thompson and other sceptics achieve is a degree of clarity in presenting their argument. This follows from their ability to analytically delineate what ‘globalisation’ must be, and then examine whether it is in fact occurring. They postulate that globalisation must refer to the process by which there emerges a “truly global economy”.<sup>60</sup> This obviously stands in contrast to Ohmae, who argues that this is already an accomplished fact.

In making this point, I draw attention to a key problem pervasive in the globalisation literature, one that is perpetuated in the writings of Held and others. This refers to the plural ways in which the term globalisation is in fact understood. This raises problems, as I will show, that reverberates throughout the whole globalisation literature and discourse. The so called ‘globalisation debate’, is not so much a debate but rather a set of incommensurable discussions about different things. What Hirst

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<sup>60</sup> Hirst and Thompson, *Globalisation in Question 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, op.cit., p.1.

and Thomson are critical of a number of descriptive postulates about the current state of affairs. The problem is that this is then portrayed as a critique of globalisation. It is not. Rather it is better understood as a challenge to the strong thesis. This is useful because the strong thesis holds a particularly powerful sway over the imaginations of the public, business and politicians alike. Hirst and Thompson “see these extreme views [the strong thesis] as... relatively coherent and capable of being developed into a clear ideal-typical conception of a globalized economic system”.<sup>61</sup> What they are taking issue with is the popular portrayal of globalisation, and its empirical limitations, as well as its ideological disciplinary consequences.

However, it is unsatisfactory in that they do not adequately engage with more complex accounts of globalisation. Effectively then, they are not in a position to claim that they have demonstrated the myth of globalisation.

### ‘Complex’ Globalisation Theory

In addition to the strong globalisation thesis, an increasingly sophisticated corpus of work has developed that I classify as *complex globalisation theory*. In this section I will summarise some of the essential features of this category, and how it articulates its position vis-à-vis the previous account. This will allow a further assessment to be made concerning the deficiencies of the strong thesis, as well as allow for a more critical evaluation to be made of the sceptical approach.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.3.

Complex globalisation theory constitutes another strand of the secondary literature on globalisation.<sup>62</sup> However, unlike the sceptical writings, here the term globalisation is maintained, though in a reworked fashion, because it is seen to function to *explain* current processes. This category encompasses a large number of writings of various hues and aspirations. I therefore confine myself to an examination of two of the more influential accounts, those of David Held, Anthony McGrew, Jonathon Perraton, David Goldblatt on the one hand, and of Jan Art Scholte on the other. In addition, I will draw upon a number of secondary sources that also fall within this category and generally agree with the core position of the above writers.

By 'complex globalisation theory' I mean that corpus of thought, distinct from the strong thesis, that explains certain trends or developments in the social realm by means of the term globalisation. Thus complex globalisation theory is concerned with the contemporary relevance of globalisation as *explanans*. Contrary to sceptical thinking, for complex globalisation theorists globalisation *is* underway. It is thought of as significant as it helps explain much that is novel about the contemporary condition; "globalization is a central driving force behind the rapid social, political and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world order".<sup>63</sup> This constitutes a core assertion that orients their work and leads them to retain the term.

Yet contrary to the assertions synonymous with the first wave of thinking on globalisation, the process here is conceived not in economic terms, nor as an

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<sup>62</sup> In addition to the authors examined here, key contributors to this literature include Roland Robertson, Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture, (London: Sage Publications, 1992); Anthony Giddens, Consequences of Modernity, (Cambridge: Polity/ Blackwell Publishers, 1992); Zygmunt Bauman, Globalization: The Human Consequences, (Columbia: New York Press, 1998). For a more comprehensive survey see Anthony McGrew & David Held, (eds.), The Global

accomplished fact but rather in terms of interconnectedness. The choice of words is important as interconnectedness is contrasted to interdependence, integration and convergence. This in effect enables a more ‘neutral’ connotation to be implied to the process because it does not rule out certain ‘imperial’ or hierarchical connotations. According to Held et.al., “globalization refers to the widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual”.<sup>64</sup> It can be thought of as “a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions”.<sup>65</sup>

What gives the interconnectedness its global dimension is the spatial reach of the phenomena.<sup>66</sup> This concern to focus upon the novel features relating to the spatial organisation of aspects of contemporary life draws attention to the fact that globalisation transcends any parochial concern with economics, or any synonymous use of the term with the idea of ‘spreading’ or ‘diffusing’. In eschewing such metaphors as ‘spreading’, Held et.al., draw attention to the limitations that ‘Euclidean’ conceptions of time and space, arguing that these conceptions have to date erroneously underwritten both the strong thesis and sceptical accounts of globalisation.<sup>67</sup>

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Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate, (Malden, Mass: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Held et.al., *Global Transformations*, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>66</sup> See David Held, ‘Democracy and Globalisation’, in Daniele Archibugi, David Held. & Martin Kohler, (eds.), Re-Imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p.13.

<sup>67</sup> Anthony MacGrew, ‘Conceptualizing Global Politics’, in Anthony G. McGrew & Paul Lewis, (eds.), Global Politics, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992). See also James Anderson, ‘The Exaggerated

It is this problematising of time and space, that constitutes perhaps the most original contribution to contemporary thinking, and is something that is at the heart of complex globalisation theory.<sup>68</sup> As Rosenberg, in his critique of the follies of globalisation recognises, in adopting globalisation as explanans, this second wave of thinking has necessitated a wholesale ‘spatialization of social theory’.<sup>69</sup> Bauman, according to Rosenberg, is typical in this regard:

It suddenly seems clear that the divisions of the continents and of the globe as a whole were the function of distances made once impossibly real thanks to the primitiveness of transport and the hardships of travel... ‘distance’ is a social product; its length varies depending on the speed with which it may be overcome...<sup>70</sup>

With their focus placed on the significance of the constraints of time and space now being overcome, Held et.al., reconceptualise globalisation as being contingent, non-linear and driven by a plurality of causes prefiguring no particular end state.<sup>71</sup> As a result, the process does not imply homogeneity or convergence. This contradicts the original strong thesis. The authors argue that the set of processes that make up globalisation can be witnessed as occurring in a dialectical manner, at once producing convergence and fragmentation, uniting and dividing.<sup>72</sup> Such a view is reflected in the work of Sorenson and Holm, who see “uneven globalization [as] best conceived as a dialectical process, stimulating integration as well as fragmentation,

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Death of the Nation-State’, in James Anderson, Chris Brook & Alan Cochrane, A Global World?, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, op.cit., p.15. Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash, ‘Globalization, Modernity and the Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction’, in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash & Roland Robertson (eds.), Global Modernities, (London: Sage Publications, 1995), p.1

<sup>69</sup> Justin Rosenberg, The Follies of Globalisation Theory: Polemical Essays, (London: Verso, 2000), p.1.

<sup>70</sup> Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, op.cit., p.12. Quoted in Rosenberg, *The Follies*, op.cit., p.2.

<sup>71</sup> Held et.al., Global Transformations, op.cit.

<sup>72</sup> See Ian Clark, Globalisation and Fragmentation: International Relations in the Twentieth Century, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Richard Falk, Predatory Globalization: A Critique, (Malden MA.: Polity Press, 1999).

universalism as well as particularism, and cultural differentiation as well as homogenization.”<sup>73</sup>

Thus the more complex account, distinguishes itself from the sceptics on the one hand, and the strong thesis on the other, not by positing itself as a sort of *via media*, but rather as something quite distinct. It does not accept the terms of the debate as laid out either in the strong thesis or the subsequent sceptical ideal, instead offering a differing take in terms of causality (multi-causal), trajectory (non-teleological), conceptualisation (contingent, non-economistic) and periodisation.

In so doing, the theory of Held et.al., attempts to move beyond certain limitations which it identifies as being shared by both the sceptical and original strong thesis. To begin with, the sceptics means of testing the extent of globalisation is problematised by Held et.al. They deny the ‘ideal’ end point that is posited by the likes of Hirst and Thompson. For Held et.al., the process is non-linear as well as multi-causal. It is not to be judged in terms of an approximation to an ideal global economy. They take issue with the sceptical account of Hirst and Thompson in this respect, because they argue that it is overly empirical and teleological in its orientation. For Held et.al., “[t]here is no a priori reason to assume that globalization must simply evolve in a single direction or that it can be understood in relation to a single ideal condition (perfect markets)”.<sup>74</sup>

This assertion constitutes a key challenge. Held et.al. are able to argue for the validity of the term globalisation, distancing it from its original associations with

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<sup>73</sup> Georg Sorenson & Hans-Henrik Holm, (eds.), Whose World Order? Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), p.6.

writers like Ohmae, yet retrieving it from the critique of the sceptics. Nonetheless, in doing so, their reconceptualisation results in an account that is problematic in that it becomes difficult to identify what is and is not explainable in terms of globalisation. Without any ideal end point or starting point by which to judge change, complex problems arise related to what the consequences of globalisation are. As a result the analysis is necessarily obfuscated. This is witnessed when examining their book, 'Global Transformations', which encompasses a huge array of changes in the cultural, social, political and economic realm, yet all linked by the parsimonious idea of globalisation. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore, that the book is entitled global transformations, relying more on a descriptive account of worldwide change.

Some of the inherent limitations identified here have been addressed by Jan Aart Scholte in his own critical examination of globalisation theory.<sup>75</sup> Scholte argues that a serious limitation to the globalisation literature is that it mistakenly conflates globalisation with a number of other processes when it is discussed. Hence at the heart of Scholte's argument concerning globalisation, is a concern to give an analytically more precise meaning to the term, something he believes is lacking in the literature.<sup>76</sup> For Scholte these conflations refer to globalisation as 'liberalization', 'internationalization', 'universalization', and 'westernization' or 'modernization'. By liberalization Scholte means the "process of removing government imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an 'open',

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<sup>74</sup> Held et.al., *Global Transformations*, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>75</sup> Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit. For a sample of other writings that generally might be said to constitute a 'third critical wave', see Hay & Watson (eds.), *Demystifying Globalisation*, op.cit. See also Germain, (ed.), *Globalisation and its Critics*, op.cit.

<sup>76</sup> Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.16. Scholte quotes the definition offered by Held et.al., in *Global Transformations*, op.cit.; "[g]lobalization can be thought of as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating

‘borderless’ world economy”. By ‘internationalization’, Scholte is referring to the intensifying of “cross-border relations with countries”.<sup>77</sup> When referring to ‘universalization’, “global means ‘worldwide’”, and globalisation “the process of spreading objects” worldwide.<sup>78</sup> Finally, Scholte associates ‘Westernization’, or ‘Modernization’, with Americanization or more generally the “spread of modernity”.<sup>79</sup>

In distinction to the above processes, Scholte understands globalisation as being a recent phenomenon that is defined by what he refers to as ‘deterritorialisation’ or in his preferred usage ‘suprateritorialization’. Scholte aligns himself with those writers who focus on the spatio-temporal nature of the process, arguing that it is only in relating globalisation to suprateritorialisation that one is able to retrieve globalisation from the overly broad and nebulous sense in which it is associated with so much that is novel. According to Scholte, globalisation entails a ‘reconfiguration of geography’, such that social geography is now “marked by the growth of suprateritorial spaces”, transcending territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.<sup>80</sup>

This is a useful set of distinctions and relevant to my own interests for a number of reasons. Firstly, Scholte’s classification enables a clearer exegesis to be done. Clarity then enables a more rigorous distinction to be made between the various processes, in order to establish what is novel if anything about globalisation, and what

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transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.” P.16.

<sup>77</sup> Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.15-16.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

significance globalisation has. This serves to focus the debate, rather than, as is currently the case, the 'debate' on the significance of globalisation being almost non-sensical due to the plurality of definitions and assumptions surrounding the term.

However, Scholte's approach is important for a further set of reasons, more relevant to my own interests here. Firstly, a focused definition will function to preclude certain ideological strategies that are currently in operation. As will be examined in section three, in evoking globalisation New Labour plays upon the fuzzy nature of the concept in order to eschew any deeper analysis of 'change'. In adopting an unclear 'common sense' understanding, stressing the obvious features and consequences of globalisation, they are able to argue that the philosophy of the Third Way is the only way forward for a party of the Left. This way forward, involves significant compromises on a number of issues, that for some, effectively severs New Labour's connections to a leftist past. Yet the account of globalisation is such that these compromises take on an unavoidable and incontestable nature.

Following on from this, Scholte's approach also has the virtue of drawing our attention to the fact that there resides a deeper theoretical orientation contained within many accounts of globalisation. This relates to the sense in which globalisation is often conflated with liberalisation, internationalisation and westernisation for example. It is this recognition that is particularly germane here.

There are for example, important consequences that unfold from recognising that globalisation is largely being conflated with liberalisation. Globalisation in this

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.8. See also Jan Aart Scholte, 'Globalization: Beyond the Buzzword', in Eleonore Koffman & Gillian Youngs, (eds.), Globalisation: Theory and Practice, (London: Pinter, 1996).

respect, refers to the process of increasing liberalisation whereby various barriers to trade are reduced or eliminated over time, to create an increasingly open or ‘borderless’ economy. Thus globalisation denotes “the process of international economic integration”.<sup>81</sup> However, understood as liberalisation, it is generally clear that these changes come about as a result of ‘barriers’ being ‘lifted’ by governmental agencies, or perhaps international organisations. Agency is easily identified, with the result that the process is not particularly obscure. Once this process is conflated with globalisation however, so it becomes less clear, lending a more inevitable and unavoidable quality to the phenomenon.

Additionally, underlying such an approach is a set of neo-liberal assumptions that discipline the ‘globalisation topic’.<sup>82</sup> Globalisation *qua* liberalisation formulates ‘A’ and ‘B’ and the processes that connects each in a very selective and contentious way, associated with a particular epistemology and ontology, i.e., it contains certain ‘philosophical commitments’. For example, the economic and political are separate, with an implicit normative claim as to the prior status of the economic with the political focusing on the effective management of the former.

What is more, as liberalisation, globalisation is seen as the antithesis of protectionism. This is done, for example by Smeets. In his article on the globalisation of international trade and investment, Smeets argues that *globalisation is the process of*

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<sup>81</sup> Harald Sander, ‘Multilateralism, Regionalism and Globalisation: The Challenges to the World Trading System’, in Harald Sander & Andras Inotai, (eds.), World Trade after the Uruguay Round: Prospects and Policy Options for the Twenty-first Century, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.27.

<sup>82</sup> For example Vincent Cable explicitly talks of an ‘economist’s’ view of globalisation. Vincent Cable, Globalisation and Global Governance, (London: RIIA, 1999).

*liberalisation*, and that “[l]iberalisation equals inclusion: protectionism exclusion.”<sup>83</sup>

Smeets continues; in this binary logic policymakers have “*little* choice: if governments stick to the common determination to raise levels of overall welfare, which has been the basis of the very success of the GATT/WTO multi-lateral trading system, there is *no* alternative to the road of progressive liberalisation of markets and enhancing competition in goods and services alike”.<sup>84</sup>

Such a formulation helps explain why the process is assumed to be positive and potentially inclusive by so many. Containing a number of liberal assumptions, globalisation takes on a ‘progressive’ quality, whilst often failing to recognise converse tendencies. Such assumptions, as discussed by Hurrel, include: the idea that the process “fosters economic efficiency”; that it “encourages international institutions and problem solving”; and that the process promotes “societal convergence built around common recognition of the benefits of markets and liberal democracy”.<sup>85</sup> It also sheds light on the nature of the ‘global logic’ ascribed to globalisation as a benign logic, ultimately in the interests of all those who would act rationally.

There are also significant insights to be gleaned from the second of Scholte’s observations, where globalisation is often understood as ‘internationalisation’. As internationalisation, globalisation denotes the process of increasing

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<sup>83</sup> Smeets, ‘Globalisation of International Trade and Investment’, in Frans Beulens, (ed.), *Globalisation and the Nation-State* (Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, 1999), p.8, emphasis added.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Andrew Hurrel & Ngaire Woods, ‘Globalisation and Inequality’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.24 No.3, 1995 p.449. See also Bryan Lowell & Dianna Farrel, *Market Unbound: Unleashing Global Capitalism*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996).

interconnectedness of “cross-border relations between countries”.<sup>86</sup> This in fact is what Hirst and Thompson have in mind in making sense of what is currently happening. According to them, the “conceptualisation of the current stage of the internationalisation of economic activity” is in fact what globalisation denotes.<sup>87</sup> They argue that an ‘inter-nationalised world economy’ is “one in which the principle entities remain national economies, or agents that continue to be primarily located in a definite national territory”.<sup>88</sup> In this conceptualisation, what remains is the premise of states or countries as the object or conduit through which activity is measured. Thus, for Dicken, internationalisation involves “the simple extension of economic activities across national boundaries”.<sup>89</sup>

What also remains in this way of thinking is the presumption that the state underpins, underwrites and empirically remains the fundamental structural feature of international society. The synonymous use of globalisation instead of internationalisation also figures (in conjunction with liberalisation), in thinking emanating from government formulation. This will be discussed in more detail and in relation to the UK government further on. Essentially, the significance of this conjunction derives from the idea that internationalisation presupposes the continued import of the state, and state system. It draws attention to the role of the state in determining the rules that subsequently allows for trade, financial flows, and other economic activity. However, masked under the generic ‘globalisation’, the impression is given of a process unfolding separately from the state.

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<sup>86</sup> Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.15.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Hirst & Grahame Thompson, ‘The Tyranny of Globalisation: Myth and Reality?’ in Buelens, (ed.), *Globalisation and the Nation-State*, op.cit. p.139.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p.141.

Thus in thinking about globalisation, its significance and implications, it becomes important to develop an account of the significance of the above conflations. This is not just in order to attain analytical clarity, but also in order to guard against purposefully obscure thinking. Conflation inherently obscures, and given certain circumstances, the consequences of this may be to realise and perpetuate particular interests; one may excuse one's actions in terms of globalisation, and as a result be in a position to mask the inherent ideological agenda that such actions are really inspired by.

What this draws attention to – issues concerning the significance of context and methodology – is not picked up on by Scholte himself. This is in part justifiable given the concerns that Scholte sets for himself. He is, after all, interested in staking out a distinct theory of globalisation. However, as I shall argue in the next section, I believe that there remains serious question marks relating to such a stance, and that in making “space and time themselves the fundamental basis of explanation”, Scholte, as with other complex theorists may have to answer to the claim that the ‘conceptual inflation’ of space and time comes at a price.<sup>90</sup>

Before turning to this, and in summary, a number of things can be said about the validity and utility of complex theory. To begin with, in contrast to the strong thesis, this second wave of thinking is focussed explicitly on the conceptualisation of globalisation, as a result offering a clearer, non-teleological and more sophisticated account of the process. The problem with this view though, is that it has the effect of obscuring as much as enlightening our understanding of contemporary changes,

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<sup>89</sup> Dicken, *Global Shift*, op.cit., p.5.

<sup>90</sup> Rosenberg, *The Follies*, op.cit., p.6.

overvaluing perhaps, the explanatory potential of spatial theory. Complex theory does not so much invalidate crucial elements to the sceptical critique, but rather relocates its emphasis elsewhere. As a result, its relevance to my thesis stems from the fact that its reworked conceptualisation of globalisation moves away from a version that stresses an inevitable and non-dialectical account.

### A Critical Hermeneutic Approach.

It will be remembered that a central question concerning ‘globalisation’ is how to make an assessment of its implications and significance, given its contested nature. In this final section I will address this question in light of a secondary set of premises related to a disavowal of any positivist approach to understanding the term, and a recognition of the fact that it is constituted in specific social-historical circumstances.

As discussed in the previous chapter, a hermeneutic approach postulates that social agents, acting on the basis of their interpretations, in part form social reality. Understanding social reality then, involves understanding the web of meanings that go into making this social world. What is more, in making sense of these webs of meaning, we alter our interpretations, with the effect that social ‘reality’ itself changes. Thus, the very process of understanding the ‘real world’ is slippery, there being no final or definitive account to read off of.

This draws attention to the constitutive role of understanding, and how it challenges the philosophical premises of a positivist conception of truth. On this view, the discrete separation of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ underlying a positivist approach is considered to be untenable.

This means that understanding ‘globalisation’ requires carrying out research into the nature of the interpretation that specific actors hold too, as these interpretations in part form that which is ‘real’. There can be no convenient distinction made between the object under investigation, in this case ‘globalisation’, and the subjects engaged in making sense of this phenomenon and acting (reacting) accordingly.

However, as discussed in chapter 2, critical hermeneutics draws attention, not only to the ontological centrality of understanding, but also to the importance of power. No two actors are the same, be they individuals or institutions. Their interpretations and their differences in terms of power will often vary, with the effect that some are more significant in ‘shaping’ and constituting that which is ‘real’, thus lending a critical inflection to the analysis. As situated actors within a structured context, consideration must be given to the inevitable variation in the ability to shape circumstances understood as their ability to manipulate meaning. Though it is indeed true that social actors are in part responsible for constructing social reality, some are more significant than others.

In allowing for this insight in examining globalisation, we are led away from an essentialist view of globalisation, with the result that it can neither be thought of as a ‘thing-in-itself’, or as something that impacts upon entities in a similar way.

Instead, questions then arise as to which interpretations of globalisation are held, by whom, and in what context. Inline with the depth hermeneutic technique, I draw attention to the social-historical milieu, highlighting the significance and role played by the *prevailing orthodoxy*. In this context this involves recognition of the significance of neoliberalism. The question becomes, what role does this orthodoxy play in reproducing a particular set of processes denoted as ‘globalisation’?

Globalisation theorists who seek to denote globalisation either as an accomplished fact, or as something that can be considered in the abstract tend to overlook the relevance of this point. This I believe is a mistake of the first order. Globalisation ought not to be understood as a disembodied phenomenon, divorced from a particular context. As stated at the outset of this inquiry, ‘ideas do not simply appear from thin air. At all times they are embedded within, and conditioned by, the wider social formation of which they are themselves a part’.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Hay, *Sceptical Notes*, op.cit.

Yet there is a secondary dimension to this given my particular concerns. Assuming no clear distinction between subject and object, one must also question whether it is not in the interests of New Labour to perpetuate one particular understanding at the cost of another. It is only in recognising this second dimension, thus disavowing any essentialist (and therefore reified) account of globalisation, that we may arrive at a means whereby judgment can be offered on interpreting an alternative significance to globalisation in any particular context on the basis of a different understanding of what 'globalisation' actually 'is'.

This draws attention to the second requirement of the hermeneutic technique, which highlights the role that the *structure* of the social realm plays. This latter point posits that one needs to be sensitive to the 'relations of domination' that characterises the social realm and that inevitably lead to some agents being 'dominant'. In the case of thinking about globalisation and New Labour, this will draw attention to factors such as electoral expediency, and the need for credibility. This will in turn play a part in the way 'globalisation' is appropriated (and thus constituted) in those particular circumstances.

New Labour, as a result of their particular place within the social structure, are in a position to shape and control the future in a way that one individual or company is not. They are, as a result, implicated in the production and reproduction of a set of processes that then resemble that which they say they must respond to. Thus we see a sort of Janis faced nature to the process, dependent at once on the belief that it is real, and yet also sustained by this belief. To the extent that additional mitigating circumstances hold, the process will continue to correspond to a particular set of processes.<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion.

It is now worth returning to some of the central questions that have oriented this chapter. Of what use is the concept of globalisation? How has it been understood? What consequences, if any, can be attributed to it? And how are we to judge its significance?

As the above analysis has concluded there are a number of limitations to the account of globalisation so far examined. The nature of these limitations are of an empirical and analytical kind. The first wave was shown to be unsatisfactory in a number of respects, particularly in the contention of a global logic, following on from the assumption of a global economy. This was shown to be an exaggeration, and in many respects simply untenable. What underlines this view, in the case of Ohmae, is an approach that is shaped by neo-liberal assumptions.

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<sup>92</sup> This will be examined in chapter 6.

This view remains highly significant due to its widespread currency. The strong thesis evokes the term as a descriptor, and assumes the causal connections that are contained within this category. The nature of these connections seem obvious, thanks in part to the social circumstances in which they have been articulated. That is to say, the view is ‘hegemonic’, promulgated in circumstances that favour it in a particular form. Thus policy, derived according to a ‘global logic’ takes on this quality also. This populist understanding conflates globalisation with liberalisation, which stems from a current prevailing orthodoxy amongst elites for neo-liberal formulations of contemporary change. The result of a complex set of assumptions on ontology and epistemology which have developed over the long term, and which often go unquestioned as a result, the empirical indicators associated with this approach are considered obvious, as do the appropriate responsive measures.

Ontologically, the strong thesis stresses a disembodied nature to globalisation. Globalisation is considered as a ‘thing in itself’, existing ‘out there’. Combined with a particular ethical dimension, that stresses the positive aspects to globalisation, the problem of ‘structural’ determinism then arises. On this view globalisation is portrayed as being ‘a process without a subject’, yet a process that is nonetheless desirable.

In examining the complex theory of Held et.al., globalisation theory proper can be identified. Complex theory determines to retain the term, but in the process finds it necessary to deal with many of the analytical deficiencies identified by the sceptical approach. This results in complex theory stripping the term down to a basic abstract spatio-temporal concept, that must ultimately still rest upon some deeper theoretical

position or remain moribund as *explanans*. The strength of this approach stems from the complex theoretical formulation offered, recognising the multi-causal, non-teleological and dialectical elements to a set of processes that are in some ways unique.

However, the question for this approach is why not simply dump the term, and instead settle for something else? For example, in the case of Scholte, why not simply refer to de-territorialisation if that is indeed what globalisation denotes?

Secondly, both the strong thesis and complex accounts suffer as a result of their lack of critical self-reflection and hermeneutical sensitivity. This has in effect silenced an important dimension, that of the significance of the ‘idea of globalisation’. In ignoring this element, research has tended to assume globalisation more as a ‘thing-in-itself’. This has resulted in a truncated account of globalisation that fails to consider the important constitutive role played by the ‘subject’ interpreting and (thus constituting) what globalisation is.

What is more, following certain hermeneutic premises, I argue that one must remain mindful of the concrete circumstances in which social life is played out. Though themselves critical of the empiricism of the sceptical critique of globalisation, such a limitation might also be legitimately lodged about the account offered by Held et.al. Whereas sceptics like Hirst and Thompson were led to a recognition of the importance of the idea of globalisation, in other words considering globalisation as a ‘discourse’, this dimension is not dealt with by Held et.al. Their approach prejudices

the analysis in favour of an empirical focus, playing down consideration of power and dominance and its relation to meaning.

Finally, in arguing for a recognition of the importance of hermeneutics for a study of globalisation and its significance, we are now in a position to progress towards the next section of the thesis. I have argued hitherto, that an assessment of globalisation entails in effect two elements. One, how is globalisation understood, and is this understanding correct empirically? That is to say, is it possible to argue that globalisation entails further liberalisation, and does it determine a particular kind of 'global logic'? My preliminary assessment of the literature would suggest no. Evidence evoked in order to validate a conceptualisation of globalisation resembling that of the strong thesis then, is empirically suspect.

However, the hermeneutic line taken here draws attention to a second element. Assessing the significance of globalisation can not be simply carried out at the level of whether it is 'right' or 'wrong'. The constitutive nature of the interpretation draws attention to a need to consider how a particular form of globalisation may come to be instantiated, reified, and as a result reproduced. Further, once one also takes into account insights drawn from the depth hermeneutic technique, we are in a position to draw attention to a more cynical dimension. That is, particular meanings may be promulgated, naturalised and legitimated by those in positions of power. This will subsequently allow for a deeper understanding of the 'nature' of globalisation, and how it is and can be instantiated in the social realm.

## Chapter 4

### ‘Globalisation’ and the Domestic Realm.

*“...is it accidental that neoliberal accounts of globalization have mainly emanated from dominant social circles and countries?”<sup>1</sup>*

#### Introduction

Globalisation is a key concept at the very heart of New Labour thinking. In Blair’s words it is “the driving force behind the Third Way”.<sup>2</sup> It has been evoked, along with the new global economy and change, as being something of an accomplished fact, and conceptualised in such a way as to redefine the constellation of opportunity and constraint. For Blair and New Labour, “certain key consequences flow from accepting globalisation and working with it”.<sup>3</sup> Evoked in order to explain why ‘reform’ and ‘modernisation’, ‘competitiveness’ and ‘enlightened engagement’ are all unavoidable necessities, these developments, taken together, constitute nothing short of a revolution in the thinking of the Labour party.

In this chapter I confine myself to the domestic elements to this discourse, which in effect means limiting myself to an examination of Blair’s understanding of globalisation. By this I mean to suggest that an initial focus needs to be placed upon the interpretation of Blair because it is he, as leader, who has by far and a way been the most articulate and enthusiastic of writers on the topic. Almost alone in 1996 and

<sup>1</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), p.287.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Facing The Modern Challenge: The Third Way In Britain and South Africa’, speech at the Old Assembly Dining Room, Parliament Building, Cape Town, South Africa, 8 January 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, speech to the Keidanren, Tokyo, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1996.

1997, Blair champions a particular version of globalisation that in turn grounds his particular vision of a ‘Third Way’ in politics.

Beginning from the premise that there already exists a ‘new global economy’, and assuming globalisation to be underway, this interpretation is largely neoliberal in outlook, with globalisation and ‘liberalisation’ generally being synonymous. In essence, this account of globalisation assumes that national governments are denied “the space in which to construct alternatives to the neoliberal orthodoxy”.<sup>4</sup> As with ‘change’, the new global economy and globalisation are depicted as existing ‘out there’, with the result that the parameters of the politically possible are already set. Circumscribed in this way, the New Labour outlook is one of *response* to globalisation. Contrary to more complex accounts of globalisation, the process is not considered to be open ended, transient or contingent upon state capacity.<sup>5</sup> Deviating in significant respects from the more complex accounts discussed in the previous chapter, this version is in fact analogous to that of the first wave writers on globalisation, sharing the premise of an already existent global economy, and a neo-liberal orientation.

In examining the nature of this interpretation, I divide the analysis into three sections, focussing on the ontological, epistemological and normative aspects of the discourse. To begin I examine the significance of globalisation in relation to agency and structure in the New Labour discourse. I argue that an initial ontological take on globalisation subsequently leads to an agenda seen to be largely about pragmatic

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<sup>4</sup> Colin Hay & Mathew Watson, ‘Labour’s Economic Policy: Studiously Courting Competence’, p.155, in Gerald R.Taylor, (ed.), The Impact of New Labour. (London: MacMillan, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> See Linda Weiss, ‘Globalisation and the Myth of the Powerless State’, *New Left Review* 225, 1997, pp84-114.

response. More, this particular take largely conflates globalisation with liberalisation, with profound consequences.

Secondly, I draw attention to the manner in which the New Labour discourse, following Blair's account, incorporates an 'end of ideology' thesis. This denotes an epistemological dimension, in that the largely positivist manner in which Blair conceptualises globalisation (separating the subject interpreting globalisation, from the 'object' globalisation itself) subsequently allows New Labour to espouse a political programme that can claim to be about 'technocratic responsive' measures, beyond the scope of party politics.

Finally I examine how Blair assumes a unifying nature to the process, in effect implying a teleological and homogenising quality to globalisation. In each instance, I question this version, drawing on my analysis in the previous chapter in order to conclude that this particular understanding actually functions, at least in the short run, to produce and reproduce a set of processes that might then be portrayed as validating their position.

#### Globalisation as Liberalisation and a 'Thing-in-Itself'.

In the following section, I explore and critically examine the first of Blair's keynote speeches on globalisation, which sets out a particular view of globalisation and its implications for domestic political agency. In examining Blair's position, I draw attention to the significance of his understanding of globalisation as at once denoting a process of liberalisation and yet also being conceptualised as a 'thing-in-itself'.

In a speech given in Tokyo in 1996, Blair discusses the nature of the global economy, and how “certain key consequences flow from accepting globalisation and working with it”.<sup>6</sup> Blair begins with a diagnosis of the situation, and narrates a short historical account of its development, in which he makes a distinction between two ‘eras’ of response, arguing that “[t]he driving force of economic change today is globalisation. Technology and capital are mobile. Industry is becoming fiercely competitive across national boundaries”.<sup>7</sup> In recognition of the profundity brought about by this change “[t]he key issue [now] facing all governments of developed nations is how to *respond*”.<sup>8</sup> The response takes the form of two stark options - ‘protectionism’ or ‘openness’:

I reject protectionism as wrong and impractical. *If this is so*, then to compete in the global market two things *must* be done. A country has to dismantle barriers to competition *and accept the disciplines of the international economy*. That has been happening the world over, to varying degrees in what might be called the first era of response to globalisation.<sup>9</sup>

On this view, this ‘first era’ narrates an account of globalisation that might instead be referred to as ‘liberalisation’, in that it is associated with the increasing liberalisation of trade and cross border activity:

Let’s examine the impact of globalisation. It is of course, true to say that world trade and the opening of markets have been proceeding for centuries. Globalisation in that sense is not new. What is new, however, is its pace and scope.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, defined negatively, it is a period in which barriers to competition are dismantled, and “the disciplines of the international economy” accepted.<sup>11</sup> This is not seen as a bad thing; rather it is a necessary phase, with acceptance portrayed as

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<sup>6</sup> Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*inevitable*. Finally, on this view, globalisation thereby takes the form of a ‘thing-in-itself’, in that as a process that drives economic change, governments are only able to respond. New Labour is therefore not implicated in any way in its constitution or current form.

A first point to make, and as discussed in the previous chapter, is the fact that globalisation ought not to be thought of as the same thing as liberalisation. Mindful of the largely sloppy and inexact way in which the term is generally (ab)used, it will be remembered that Scholte points out that it “is not the same thing as internationalisation, liberalization, universalization or modernization”.<sup>12</sup> This mistake is nevertheless made in that instead of talking of liberalisation, Blair opts for the term globalisation. Thus it might be said, perhaps glibly, that from the outset, New Labour operates on the basis of an erroneous (though broadly accepted) understanding of globalisation, it simply denoting the intensification of world trade and the further opening up of markets.

Conflating liberalisation with globalisation, as discussed in the previous chapter, is not an uncommon occurrence. It is, as was suggested, both an essential element of the strong thesis, and an association that remains as the dominant way in which globalisation is generally understood. For Scholte this is unfortunate because in confusing globalisation with liberalisation, the former is robbed of an independent explanatory role. However, and as I have suggested, there are far deeper concerns with regard to making such a conflation, particularly once we factor in questions of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> As discussed, Scholte argues that if anything “globalization refers to a far-reaching change in the nature of social space”. Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.46, p.50.

power and context. Thus in the case of New Labour, it is important to draw out these consequences by delving further into Blair's argument.

With acceptance portrayed as 'inevitable' in the first phase of globalisation, many of the policies associated with the Conservative governments of the 1980's take on a different status. According to Blair, "[m]uch of the change [in the 1980's] was to do not with ideology but with the altered circumstances of the world economy".<sup>13</sup> Therefore, as Hay points out, the need to modernise, and the underlying logic of that modernisation, takes on an inevitable quality. That is to say, following from this, the New Labour "proponents of modernisation" can now "rely... upon a rather more deterministic logic of economic necessity."<sup>14</sup> Thus, "rather than see Thatcherism as *initiating* a break with the past, it is seen as a *response* to the distinctive economic (and presumably the attendant political) pressures of new times."<sup>15</sup>

The significance of this will be re-interpreted in greater detail further into the thesis. Nevertheless, the point to be made here concerns the significance of the conjunction of globalisation as liberalisation and globalisation as a 'thing-in-itself', and the deterministic logic that follows.

In combination, this conjunction enables Blair to make a number of points relating to the legacy bequeathed to him. Because globalisation is not seen as being the result of previous and specific government measures - measures animated by a prevailing

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<sup>13</sup> Blair, 'The Global Economy', op.cit.

<sup>14</sup> Colin Hay, The Political Economy of New Labour: Labouring Under False Pretences? (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.9. Emphasis in original. See also Martin Smith, 'A Return to Revisionism? The Labour Party's Policy Review', in Martin Smith & Joanna Spear (eds.), The Changing Labour Party (London: Routledge, 1992), p.14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

orthodoxy (and propagated by those unambiguously of the right) - Blair is subsequently able to posit that certain policies (particularly policies concerned with further liberalisation) also take on a particular form; as policies forced upon the government of the day. Blair writes:

Governments of Left and Right in the 1980's abolished exchange controls, cut top rates of tax, and deregulated trade, just as governments of Left and Right in the 1960's and 1970's pursued different policies... Changing these types of policy was the first wave of activity by governments to meet the challenge of globalisation.<sup>16</sup>

Thus a particular ontological dimension to globalisation contained in this conceptualisation functions to lend an inevitable, and de-politicised quality to the process of liberalisation. By ontological here I mean how globalisation is conceptualised as a 'thing-in-itself', 'out there' determining outcomes. What is important to recognise, is that framing the approach in this way allows Blair to discuss two eras of response *to* globalisation. This precludes thinking about the possibility of the process itself evolving, it plays down any recognition of its contested nature, and silences the idea that it may in part be constituted and reproduced as a result of the interpretations held by key actors.

Many take issue with the idea that the kind of 'modernisation' practiced by New Labour is explainable in terms of the external constraints the party faces.<sup>17</sup> In challenging this explanation, the convention is to supplant the term 'globalisation'

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<sup>16</sup> Blair, 'The Global Economy', op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> Important challenges include, Geoffrey Garret, Partisan Politics in the Global Economy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Colin Hay, 'Anticipating Accommodations, Accommodating Anticipations: The Appeasement of Capital in the Modernization of the British Labour Party, 1987-1992', *Politics and Society*, 25.2, 1995, pp234-256. Mark Wickham-Jones, 'Social Democracy and Structural Dependency: The British Case. A Note on Hay', *Politics and Society*, 25:2, 1995, pp257-265. Mark Wickham-Jones, 'New Labour in the Global Economy: Partisan Politics and the Social Democratic Model', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.2, No.1, April 2000, pp1-25. For a review of each of these authors, see David Coates, 'Capitalist

for ‘external constraint’. Thus to criticise ‘globalisation’ is to criticise their understanding of ‘constraint’: that is they question that we need to respond to ‘globalisation’ in a particular way. Garret, for example, draws attention to the fact that ‘competitiveness’ is not curtailed as the result of redistribution and that exit options remain limited (due to the ‘positive externalities associated with large public economies).<sup>18</sup> Garret points to the fact that ‘globalisation’ is in fact likely to augment political demands for such policies domestically, given the increased insecurity and feeling of vulnerability.<sup>19</sup> Wickham-Jones agrees, pointing to a continued ‘policy space’ for a reformist social democratic government operating in the context of the UK.<sup>20</sup> Both point to the fact that social democratic policies can in fact be desirable to capital.

These constitute important counter-arguments, very much in line with the sceptical position. However, we need to recognise that ‘globalisation’ also functions more as an idea, and is not simply an external (empirical) constraint. As important as these criticisms are however, we need to continue to explore the New Labour argument in order to tease out the deeper consequences of their position.

There are additional consequences to the particular ontological position contained in the discourse. Globalisation, conceptualised as an (empirical) ‘thing-in-itself’, is in fact synonymous with a formulation of globalisation as ‘*a process without a*

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Models and Social Democracy: The Case of New Labour’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.3, No.3, October 2001, pp284-307.

<sup>18</sup> Though social democratic policies also require an ‘encompassing’ labour movement to be successful. See Garret, *Partisan Politics*, op.cit., p.5, 9,10-11, 44.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp139-144.

<sup>20</sup> Wickham-Jones defines a ‘reformist goal’, as an “intentional commitment to egalitarian and redistributive outcomes as a direct and central aspect of economic policy”. Wickham-Jones, *New Labour in the Global Economy*, op.cit., p.3.

*subject*'.<sup>21</sup> It is worth re-quoting part of the previous passage; “[t]he driving force of economic change today is globalisation. Technology and capital are mobile. Industry is becoming fiercely competitive across national boundaries”.<sup>22</sup> In other words, globalisation ‘drives’ the process; technology and capital, understood in the passive form, each determine outcomes. In order to appreciate the importance of this, it is useful to draw attention to *context* and *agency*.

As Fairclough points out, “[t]he crucial starting point for the politics of New Labour is acceptance of the new international economic liberalism – ‘the new global economy’ in its own terms – as an inevitable and unquestionable fact of life upon which politics and government are to be premised”.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this is reflected in the title Blair chooses to give his speech, namely ‘the Global Economy’. On the basis of a particular understanding as to the nature of the context, Blair then determines the nature of the constraints that he believes New Labour must subsequently follow. Two key factors, in line with the strong thesis, are assumed about this: first, because a new global economy is *already* in existence it must be accepted *on its own terms*; second, and given the former, a particular ‘global logic’ follows, resting upon significant assumptions relating to the first point.

In examining this point, attention must be given to both the evidence evoked, and the argument subsequently used by Blair to justify his case. First, thanks to the predominance of the strong thesis view of globalisation, Blair is able to assume that the ‘facts’ of the situation ‘speak for themselves’. As Fairclough argues, the premise

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<sup>21</sup> See Colin Hay and David Marsh, ‘Introduction: Demystifying Globalisation’, in Colin Hay & David Marsh, (eds.), Demystifying Globalisation, (London: MacMillan, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> Norman Fairclough, New Labour New Language? (London: Routledge, 2000), p.15.

of the global economy is more assumed than it is demonstrated.<sup>24</sup> To the extent that this is true, this translates to mean an acceptance of a neo-liberal understanding. And it is on this basis, that he then ascribes certain consequences (global logic) as 'obvious'.

In simply listing a series of indicators he believes are obvious and associated with globalisation, Blair assumes that the facts that make up these lists are enough to validate the existence of a global economy, and in themselves can explain the implications in turn derived from the existence of this economy. Blair was comfortable with this strategy in 1999, in his Lord Mayor's speech, in which he refers to a number of anecdotal examples in order to underwrite his position. These include: the quantity traded on current currency exchange markets; the increase in total world trade; and the levels of foreign direct investment. In other words, the very indicators associated with the strong thesis:<sup>25</sup>

People still under-estimate the impact of globalisation. Technology is re-writing the rules of business and the rules of trade. Economic frontiers are crashing down. One and a half trillion dollars are traded every day on the world's currency exchanges... Total world trade has doubled in the last 10 years. In 1970, British overseas investment was 9 billion pounds. It has now risen to 400 billion pounds. Household British names like Christies and Rover are owned by French and German companies. And household American names like Burger King and Holiday Inn are owned by British companies.<sup>26</sup>

The strength of this above approach is twofold. First, as suggested, it taps into what was generally thought to be the case by the wider public at the time, i.e. it plays on the fact that it is seen to be obvious, or common sense. As such it is considered to be incontrovertible and uncontroversial. Second, an additional virtue of this approach

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Blair, 'Shaping a Pivotal Role For Britain in the World', speech at the Guildhall, London, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1999.

stems from not having to develop a deeper critical analysis of a more systemic kind. That is, such an approach allows Blair to avoid the need for an analysis, “still less [sic] a critique of the modern capitalist system”, something that is reinforced as the result of globalisation being formulated as a ‘process without a subject’.<sup>27</sup>

So the above facts are made meaningful thanks to the existence of a hegemonic view of globalisation that bears all the hallmarks of the strong thesis; hence drawing attention to its significance. Blair is able to promulgate it as if it were obvious - along with its implications - and indeed be confident that it will generally be accepted in such a way as well.<sup>28</sup> This connotes an important dimension to ‘globalisation’ that, as I suggested in the previous chapter, remains largely unexplored in both the sceptical and complex literature on the subject, drawing attention to how a prevailing orthodox view, once adhered to by those in power, can be constituted and reproduced because it is not considered to be problematic.

Following the hermeneutic lines outlined earlier, the effect of this is to reify the process.<sup>29</sup> Thus, to understand the nature of ‘globalisation’ one must give due consideration, not just to the paucity of the argument judged empirically, but to an additional feature associated with ‘context’ - taking into account the relative significance of dominant ideas, as these ideas play a central role in potentially constituting a particular ‘reality’.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, op.cit., p.29.

<sup>28</sup> Conversely, where such a view has not gained currency (for example France), then so such an argument and position would from the outset be untenable.

Returning to the form of argument adopted, Blair, in this instance, justifies his position simply by referring to lists of ‘facts’, which he assumes ‘speak for themselves’ in explaining the impact of globalisation. These facts are not related to one another or understood within a more critical theoretical account. Rather, each fact is given ‘equivalence’, referring to how items in lists (for example the quantity traded on currency markets, and the levels of total world trade), “are connected only in so far as they appear together, [with] no deeper explanations [being] sought.”<sup>30</sup> This is significant in that the items are ‘paratactic’; that is, “their elements are equal, one is not subordinate to another.”<sup>31</sup>

Blair assumes that they do not need to be related according to an underlying theory. These facts can simply be related in a generic fashion in order to give an impression about the *impact* of globalisation. This has the result of avoiding the rather thorny issue of the need for any deeper structural critique. As Fairclough points out, “[t]he factors or elements ascribed to globalisation are connected only in the sense that they appear together. There is no attempt at explanation that tries to specify deeper relations amongst them (e.g. of cause and effect) which might constitute a system”.<sup>32</sup> Blair is thus able to avoid any deeper analysis of the contemporary capitalist system and the particular form that current changes take. He is instead able to merely appeal to what may be referred to as a shallow ‘logic of appearances’.

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<sup>29</sup> It should be pointed out however, that whether or not this process of reification can be interpreted as ideological additionally necessitates factoring in background motivations and locating these in terms of sustaining relations of domination.

<sup>30</sup> Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, op.cit., p.162.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

Nevertheless, 'facts' cannot be meaningful in and of themselves. Such a position, positivist in orientation, fails to recognise that meaning does not inhere in the 'objective' realm itself. All that can be said in this respect, is that the effect of favouring this 'logic of appearances' is to disguise the nature of this particular version of globalisation, which in turn masks a degree of complicity in reproducing this version as a result of acting in accordance with its precepts.

A second key element, related to agency, concerns the fact that the global economy (and globalisation) must be accepted on 'it's own terms'. This entails a choice, with one either opting for 'protectionism' or 'openness'. In common with the 'strong thesis' examined in the previous chapter, Blair shares the limited view of there being only two options, what Weiss refers to as 'passivity' or 'closure'.<sup>33</sup> This then underscores Blair's commitment to free trade and liberalisation.<sup>34</sup> Protectionism is given a pejorative connotation, and associated with isolation as opposed to engagement. This black and white 'either/or' conceptualisation, ignoring certain gradations between the poles in order to make the options stark, then gives rise to a fatalism in the face of globalisation.

The consequences of this are far reaching, not only in terms of the status accorded to what I have previously referred to as denoting a 'global logic', but also in terms of that which is considered permissible. Within the discourse, the status that this global logic subsequently takes is of an unavoidable, yet also teleological and rational process. Blair states that protectionism is both 'wrong' and 'impractical'. Thus, his

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<sup>33</sup> Linda Weiss, 'Managed Openness: Beyond Neoliberal Globalism', *New Left Review*, Number 239, November/December 1999, p.127.

dismissal has both an ethical ('wrong') and a pragmatic ('impractical') dimension. The ethical dimension is important here in that globalisation, in being associated with liberalisation, automatically takes on a positive dimension in the minds of New Labour. As Hurrel and Woods argue, the process of liberalisation is assumed to be 'progressive', 'inclusive' and conducive of co-operation and peaceable relations.<sup>35</sup>

These assumptions are then carried over into thinking about the consequences of globalisation. Thus in the minds of New Labour, such an optimism is also imputed to globalisation as well. Though unavoidable, the process is nonetheless desirable because it will result in a set of outcomes that approximate an increasingly unified and efficient market from which all can potentially benefit, culminating in the idea that one ought to 'embrace' change.

It is also argued that resistance is 'impractical'. This entails that any ethical stance that promotes resistance is nonetheless spurious, as the forces associated with globalisation preclude any resistance. Hence it would be unreasonable to 'resist' doing that which is seen to be obvious. On this view, "[n]o country is immune from the massive change that globalisation brings".<sup>36</sup>

Importantly, the profound impact of that change is experienced by *all nations*, and regardless of whether the government of the day is of the Left or Right:

What impresses me most is not the differences in the challenge this change poses for our countries. It is the similarities. And not just for countries like

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<sup>34</sup> Blair is not alone in this strategy. Gordon Brown also contrasts *Laissez-faire* with "1930s protectionism". Gordon Brown, 'Rediscovering Public Purpose in the Global Economy', speech delivered to the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Hurrel & Ngaire Woods, 'Globalization and Inequality', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol.24, No.3, 1995, pp447-70.

<sup>36</sup> Blair, 'Facing The Modern Challenge', op.cit.

France and Great Britain that are at similar stages of economic development. But in Latin America, in Eastern Europe, in the Far East, even in parts of Africa.<sup>37</sup>

Here Blair not only posits a particular understanding of ‘change’, as something ‘out there’, independent of any subject, and understood in the singular. He is also led to assume a degree of homogeneity in the agent, in this case the states that change impacts upon. This is important in that globalisation can be assumed to neither favour nor disfavour a state according to any indigenous features, for example wealth. It is neutral in this conceptualisation, as it is with the individual within the state. Each experiences globalisation in such a way as to suggest a response that is positive, i.e. it should be embraced.<sup>38</sup>

But is this view tenable? From the previous chapter, a number of points can be made. Firstly, globalisation is neither a ‘thing-in-itself’, nor a ‘process-without-a-subject’. It does not determine a policy of ‘openness’ or ‘closure’, nor is it, in its current manifestation, neutral. This means that ‘it’, manifests itself as a set of processes determined by key agents (thus reflecting power). Sceptics such as Weiss, Berger and Dore, and Baker et.al., all draw attention to the “substantial area for analysis, institutional reform, and policy action” available to a government.<sup>39</sup> Reflecting not only the variety of forms systems of capitalist accumulation takes, but also allowing

<sup>37</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Third Way’, speech to the National Assembly, Paris, France, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1998.

<sup>38</sup> This is why Callinicos considers this position to be ‘neo-conservative’, as reflected in the following quote of Blair’s; “Globalization has brought us economic progress and material well-being. But it also brings fear in its wake”. Though recognising this concern Blair nonetheless holds to the view that it is unfounded; like a fear of spiders, it is a fear that can and ought to be overcome. Blair, Tony. ‘Values and the Power of Community’, speech to the Global Ethics Foundation, Tübingen University, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2000. Quoted in Alex Callinicos, Against the Third Way, (Cambridge: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.16.

<sup>39</sup> Weiss, Managed Openness, op.cit. p.127. See also Suzanne Berger & Ronald Dore, (eds.), National Diversity and Global Capitalism, (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1996); Linda Weiss, ‘Globalization and National Governance: Antinomy or Interdependence?’ *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.5, December 1999, pp1-30.

for significant differences between particular state set-ups, 'globalisation' cannot be used to justify the orientation suggested here.

Those commentators who specifically focus on the Labour party and 'globalisation' also reinforce such a position.<sup>40</sup> Hence, Hay, Wickham-Jones, Garret, Smith, Coates and Panitch, all (though from different perspectives), critically examine the options that the UK retains in light of current processes of change.<sup>41</sup>

And so, in and of themselves, the 'facts' associated with globalisation are largely meaningless, in the sense that the amount traded on financial currency markets, though important, does not predetermine a policy as inevitable and unavoidable, and does not validate the existence of 'globalisation'. Instead, the particular approach adopted by Blair suggests a converse interpretation; it can be understood as an attempt to reinforce a particular set of processes, whereby the 'reality' of globalisation (selectively understood) is constituted.

Blair's version of globalisation thus formed ought not to be thought of as neutral, as it *cannot* favour states or individuals equally. As Scholte argues:

Globalization has had significant effects on various types of social stratification, including with respect to class, country, gender, race, the urban/rural divide and age...on the whole it has tended to widen gaps in life chances...these injustices are not inherent to globalization, *but have mainly flowed from neoliberal approaches to new geography.*<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> As Hay points out, New Labour simply conflate "the necessities of new times with the contingencies of neo-liberalism". Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour*, op.cit., p.10.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to those already cited, see Leo Panitch & Colin Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*, (London: Verso, 1997); Steve Ludlum & Martin Smith, (eds.), *New Labour in Government*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000); David Coates & Peter Lawler, (eds.), *New Labour in Power*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, op.cit., p.234. Emphasis added.

Given the variety of situations individuals find themselves living in, there is therefore little reason to assume that change is necessarily a favourable thing.

To sum up, I have examined some of the consequences that flow from an account that conflates liberalisation with globalisation, assuming it to be a ‘thing-in-itself’. This, I argue, is a mistake. The validity of the argument that ‘globalisation’ can be thought of as determining a particular set of responses, or that these responses are inevitable, or indeed desirable, is questionable. This particular analysis suffers from a lack of depth, and depends upon avoiding a critique of the economic system, in favour of an account that rests upon a shallow ‘logic of appearances’.

Blair does not offer any sustained theoretical argument to justify his position, to identify agency, or to qualify the desirability of the process. This general mode of argument silences the problematic and contested nature of what in fact the ‘commonsense’ strong thesis holds to and entails. As will be examined in the next section on Third Way theory, this has important consequences, allowing New Labour to talk of a more permanent ‘reconciliation of antagonisms’, that follows from them ascribing ‘unifying’ traits to contemporary processes of change. Centrally, it enables New Labour to de-politicise the process, and thus present its programme, geared as it is to responding to globalisation, as non-ideological and pragmatic. It is in this respect that I refer to the epistemological dimension to the globalisation discourse, drawing attention to an ‘end of ideology’ thesis.

#### Globalisation and the Third Way: De-Politicising the Domestic Agenda

Blair defines the response to globalisation in the first era in negative terms, as a period in which barriers to competition are dismantled and ‘the disciplines of the international economy’ accepted. Though still about responding to globalisation, a second era is now posited that is distinguished from the first era by its more creative and proactive nature. However, and importantly, as in the first era, one does not have a hand in shaping the process, i.e. the ontological status of globalisation remains unchanged.<sup>43</sup>

The initial position on globalisation in this period plays its part in justifying New Labour disavowing many of the traditional policies that have defined and distinguished social democratic parties and the left. Such policies include a commitment to full employment, egalitarianism, Keynesian demand-management, and the belief in pervasive state involvement in social and economic life.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, this position develops to encompass a more creative role for agency, away from a ‘hands-off’ approach towards a mixture of technocratic and supply side measures, with the government now working in ‘partnership’ with the market. What is more, as the measures are promulgated against a backdrop of globalisation, they are seen to be urgent.<sup>45</sup> Taken as a whole, the above programme is formulated as a political philosophy called the Third Way.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, op.cit.

<sup>44</sup> See Giddens, *The Third Way*, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>45</sup> For New Labour globalisation is like a race; “globalisation is not just here to stay. It is here to accelerate”. Robin Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and the National Interest’, speech by the Foreign Secretary to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

<sup>46</sup> I will not enter into too detailed a discussion of all the component parts of ‘Third Way’ thinking, but here contain myself to the function that a particular understanding of globalisation plays in the discourse. For a discussion of the genesis of third way theory, I refer the reader to Alan Finlayson, ‘Third Way Theory’, *Political Quarterly*, Vol 70, No.3., July-September 1999, pp271-280, and Michael Temple, ‘New Labour’s Third Way: Pragmatism and Governance’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.2, No.3, October 2000, pp302-325. The essential elements of third way theory are spelled out and thoroughly discussed in Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way and its Critics*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Anthony Giddens, (ed.), *The Global Third Way Debate*, (Malden Mass.: Polity

Third Way thinking is construed as being a pragmatic formula for “achieving prosperity in a world of rapid economic and technological change”, given that “[b]ig government doesn’t work, but no government works even less”.<sup>47</sup> Blair draws a clear line between now and the past, with old Left and new Right constituting the old dogmatic views that characterise those times:

The political debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the massive ideological battleground between left and right – are over. Echoes remain, but they mislead as much as they illuminate.<sup>48</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be a battle around ideology. But it will be a struggle for progress. Guided not by dogmatic ideology but by pragmatic ideals, it can be achieved.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike ‘old Left’ and ‘new Right’ thinking, there now exists a Third Way which is ‘non-ideological’. It is not seen as a *via media* but rather a move beyond these ideologies.<sup>50</sup> And it is this assertion that draws attention to the centrality of globalisation.

In a keynote speech given at the annual Confederation of Business Industry conference, Blair develops this relationship of Third Way politics with the present, arguing that it constitutes a progressive step beyond the dated ideological positions of the past:

I reject the rampant *laissez-faire* of those who believe government has no role in a productive economy; and I reject too, as out of date and impractical, the recreation or importation of a model of the corporate state popular a generation ago. Today the role of government is not to command but to

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Press, 2001). For an account of the Blairite debt to Giddens’ arguments, see C. Bryant, ‘The Third Way, Two Tonies – and a Single Vision?’ *European Consortium for Political Research News*, Vol 10, No.2, pp17-18.

<sup>47</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>48</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’, speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Blair, Untitled speech at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Vincent, ‘New Ideologies for Old?’ *Political Quarterly*, Vol.69, No.1, 1998, pp48-58.

facilitate, and to do so in partnership with industry in limited but key areas. This is not a matter of ideology but of national interest.<sup>51</sup>

The above approach shares in common certain traits that characterised the ‘end of ideology’ debate. This set of arguments, as outlined in chapter two, posited that the intensity of ideology was inversely correlated to the degree of economic development.<sup>52</sup> The basic argument posited that as countries became increasingly ‘developed’, ‘ideology’ would demise. What would remain was an increasingly ‘technocratic’ role for the government. Ideologies, on this view, were associated with apparently rigid and dogmatic approaches such as Marxism. These were seen in contrast to the views held by the liberal western nation-states that had evolved beyond such positions.

In the above, Blair is keen to label the old Left and new Right as being out of date and ‘ideological’. Thus, as with ‘end of ideology’ theory, New Labour lends a pejorative association to the term. Moreover, and contrary to the approaches of the old Left and new Right, Third Way thinking is seen as something that transcends the ideological limitations associated with the former doctrines. It is held that the new context and set of associated trends (globalisation and ‘change’), bring with them the possibility of non-ideological progressive politics, beyond Left and Right, traditionally understood. That is, a set of objective circumstances brought about by change, and more specifically globalisation, has caused an obvious set of developments that demand uncontroversial (nondogmatic) responses. As a result, any government of the centre or centre-left all face the same array of problems, and

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<sup>51</sup> Tony Blair, ‘New Labour, New Economy’, speech to the annual conference of the Confederation of British Industry, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1995.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties, (Glenco Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

presumably simply need to apply the same (technocratic) mixture of solutions with ideology being supplanted by ‘national interest’.<sup>53</sup>

Thus replacing ‘development’ in this end of ideology thesis is ‘change’ and its implications. All states are confronted by a new set of issues, the logical response to which are similar – openness, flexibility and deregulation. The pursuit of the national interest limits the role of government as being that of ‘facilitator’, working in ‘partnership’ with industry in ‘limited’ areas. More specifically, the aim of intervention, Blair suggests, is to enhance competitiveness; targeting individuals in order to enhance their life chances, with the additional aim of providing a productive labour force. The fact that globalisation determines the approach means that the party has no alternative. Thus lacking any ‘room for manoeuvre’, and following the erasure of agency within the process, it is held that a space is created to viably talk of non-ideological (depoliticised) approach.<sup>54</sup>

With economic circumstances having put an end to the applicability of rigid ideological approaches, New Labour instead see a more technocratic role for government in attempting to realise ‘leftist’ values. Blair believes New Labour must now seek to realise the goals to which it aspires in a circumscribed context, one that embraces openness and accepts the ‘disciplines of the international economy’. The spectre of ‘low cost countries’ looms large. In order to remain competitive British

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<sup>53</sup> “This is not a matter of ideology but of national interest”. Blair, ‘New Labour, New Economy’, op.cit.

<sup>54</sup> According to Burnham, ‘depoliticisation’ can be understood as a governing strategy, “placing at one remove the political character of decision-making”. Peter Burnham, ‘New Labour and the Politics of Depoliticisation’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.3, No.2, June 2001, pp127.

industry can only operate where ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’ and ‘creativity’ form a key part:<sup>55</sup>

In the end, none of our nations can compete in the old way. There is no future as low wage, low skill sweatshop economies with the rewards going to the few, in the hope they trickle down to the many.<sup>56</sup>

In the increasingly global economy of today, we cannot compete in the old way. Capital is mobile, technology can migrate quickly and goods can be made in low cost countries and shipped to developed markets. British business must compete by exploiting capabilities which its competitors cannot easily match or imitate...knowledge, skills and creativity...<sup>57</sup>

This focus reinforces the importance of the labour market as a key issue at stake.

Blair is keen to highlight the importance of ‘flexibility’, understood as ‘adaptability’ in a world of change. According to Blair, “[t]he word ‘flexible’ has a loaded meaning in the French translation. But for me it means adaptable”.<sup>58</sup> Here ‘flexibility’ loses any pejorative associations due to the fact that it is now defined against change; thus as discussed, globalisation functions to de-politicise the issue.

And it is not just flexibility that benefits from this reorientation. The new imperatives associated with the rise of the global economy function to de-politicise a number of additional responsive measures, for example operational independence for the Bank of England.<sup>59</sup> The management of interest rate policy and the money supply is also de-politicised in that it is reduced to being merely a technocratic issue. In fact Blair goes one step further.<sup>60</sup> In line with the neoliberal distinction (and relative valuation)

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<sup>55</sup> See Stephen Driver & Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp32-33.

<sup>56</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Trade and Industry ‘Building the Knowledge-Driven Economy’ (White Paper), (London: The Stationery Office, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>59</sup> On this issue see Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour*, op.cit., p.138.

<sup>60</sup> The extent of this shift is illustrated by the rejection of a more modern and moderate variant of leftist thinking; ‘stakeholding’. As Driver and Martell point out, one need only contrast Blair’s Singapore speech in 1995 with the position articulated in the 1997 Labour Manifesto, *A New Economic Future for Britain*. See Driver & Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, op.cit.,

of the role of the political and the economic, Blair suggests that “there is no longer any right or left politics in economic management today”.<sup>61</sup> According to Blair:

[t]he era of the grand ideologies – a ll-encompassing, a ll-pervasive, total in their solutions, and often dangerous – is over. In particular, the battle between market and public sector is over.<sup>62</sup>

In this post ideological context then, the government’s role “becomes less about regulation than equipping people for economic change”.<sup>63</sup> The role that the state does play in this altered and changing context concerns issues relating to the ‘supply side’. New Labour posits that it must now focus instead on ensuring a continued competitive advantage, reflecting what Cerny has coined as being the ‘competitive state’.<sup>64</sup>

Such a position reflects the development in thinking concerning the ‘new forces’ unleashed by globalisation. These determine that the essential role for government is to “[deliver] macro economic stability, [tackle] supply side barriers to growth, and [deliver] employment and economic opportunities for all.”<sup>65</sup> In line with the Major government, a concern is placed on ‘sound money’, i.e. fiscal prudence (balancing the budget over the medium term), and keeping inflation within strictly set targets.<sup>66</sup>

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pp51-60. See also Will Hutton, The State We’re In, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1995); Gavin Kelly, Dominic Kelly & Andrew Gamble, (eds.), Stakeholder Capitalism, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997).

<sup>61</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>62</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Security in a World of Change: The New Politics of the Left’, in Tony Blair, New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country, (London: Fourth Estate, 1996), p.213.

<sup>63</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>64</sup> The ‘competitive state’, refers to the way in which states now struggle in an age of globalisation to “retain a share of a fixed stock of world capital”. Phil Cerny, The Changing Architecture of Politics, (London: Sage, 1990). Quoted in Colin Hay & Matthew Watson, ‘Labour’s Economic Policy: Studiously Courting Competence’, in Gerald R. Taylor, (ed.), The Impact of New Labour, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1999), p.155.

<sup>65</sup> Ed Balls, ‘Open Macro-Economics in an Open Economy’, Scottish Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 43, No. 2, 1998, p.113.

<sup>66</sup> In July 1997 fiscal policy was tied to two rules; “[f]irst, over the economic cycle, the government would only borrow to invest (public consumption would therefore be paid for by taxation). Secondly, the government would ensure that the level of public debt as a proportion of national income would be held at a stable and prudent level”. Burnham, New Labour and the Politics of Depoliticisation, op.cit.,

This follows because credibility places a premium on stability.<sup>67</sup> As Gordon Brown's chief economic adviser points out, "the rapid globalization of the world economy has made achieving credibility more rather than less important, particularly for an incoming left-of-centre government".<sup>68</sup> Thus, in light of the importance of credibility, the policy effectively eschewed an interventionist role, and instead leads the party strategists to focus instead on the supply side of the economy.

Thompson surmises this position as being a kind of 'supply side socialism', involving a disavowal of 'radical interventionism' and Keynesianism, whilst stressing instead the import of supply side measures geared towards raising productivity and opportunity. These measures ultimately function to meet the aspiration of full employment and equality of opportunity. Though moving away from redistribution, the position does still favour a facilitating role for the state in aiding the employment opportunities of the individual. However, in macroeconomic terms this nonetheless implies a degree of 'inactivism', being concerned simply with securing stable monetary conditions.<sup>69</sup> Keynesian thinking is rejected in favour of a belief that the economy is likely to tend toward equilibrium, and does not suffer from adjustment rigidities or insufficient demand at 'full employment' levels.<sup>70</sup>

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pp141-142. The current inflation target is 2.5% growth in the retail price index. On this see Werner Bonefeld & Peter Burnham, 'The Politics of Counter-Inflationary Credibility in Britain', 1990-1994', in *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol.30, No.1, 1998, pp.32-52.

<sup>67</sup> For a critique of this emphasis in favour of a 'Neo-Keynesian' approach see Will Hutton, 'New Keynesianism and New Labour', in Andrew Gamble & Tony Wright, *The New Social Democracy*, (Oxford: The Political Quarterly Publishing Co., 1999), pp97-102.

<sup>68</sup> Balls, *Open Macro Economics*, op.cit., p.118. Of course it is not lost on the party that the humiliating devaluations of the past have all occurred during Labour terms of office in 1949, 1967 and 1976.

<sup>69</sup> See Noel Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party: The Economics of Democratic Socialism 1884-1995*, (London: UCL Press, 1996). See also, Nicholas Ellison, *Egalitarian Thought and Labour Politics: Retreating Visions*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Hutton, *New Keynesianism and New Labour*, op.cit.

Such a position however has remained controversial and subject to considerable debate in that the above policies approximate a more neo-liberal position in economic policy.<sup>71</sup> What is obviously crucial in this respect is whether New Labour can justifiably present their position as being, not one of acquiescence, but rather as acceptance of an inevitable position that is essentially neither left nor right.

In this respect, we now see that this limited view of the state benefits from the obscure manner in which agency and causality operate. ‘Capital’ and ‘technology’ form two key elements that validate globalisation, underpin its significance, and validate the above position as not being one of acquiescence. To begin with, the mobile and transitory nature of capital and technology disciplines the demand side possibilities for government intervention. That is, the fiscal environment must balance the needs of attracting and retaining each, and of preventing capital flight. The spectre of a highly mobile form of capital and technology is then used to justify both ‘flexibility’ in the labour market, and a ‘competitive’ tax regime.

There nonetheless remains little discussion of what ‘capital’ is, or who controls it. As Hirst has pointed out, in the case of capital, the question remains – what ‘capital’ are you talking about?<sup>72</sup> In gauging the significance of this point, little can be interpreted about it in terms of universals other than that a ‘mobile’ form of capital perhaps represents a bigger problem for the United Kingdom than Germany, due to its greater

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<sup>71</sup> See Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour*, op.cit.

<sup>72</sup> Hirst points out that “[fi]rst it is firms, and, as we have seen, even most large multi-nationals have been reluctant to re-locate their core production facilities away from their main markets. Secondly, it is funds mobilised by financial institutions, but these are in the main the savings, pensions and life insurance of the broad middle class of the advanced industrial countries...[therefore] those flows can be controlled to some degree by public policy...[finally] [d]omestic capital markets still provide 90 per cent of national investment”. Paul Hirst, ‘Globalisation and Social Democracy’, in Gamble & Wright, *The New Social Democracy*, op.cit, p.88.

reliance on finance capital from abroad.<sup>73</sup> Blair remains silent on the possibilities of legislating in order to affect the impact for example of short terms speculative flows, or the possibility of taxing them. He is able to do so, I argue, due to the current predominance and general acceptance of the strong thesis of globalisation. The general consensus has it that such a position would simply be absurd.

Additionally, globalisation, presented as a ‘process-without-a-subject’, denotes the occurrence of nominalization, as it represents change as if it were a noun. This purposely backgrounds such agents of change as ‘multi-national’ and ‘trans-national’ companies.<sup>74</sup> Where Blair and New Labour do discuss business, it is in terms of British business defined vis-à-vis foreign companies, done however, not in order to unmask the agents most significant in driving the agenda for change, but rather, to instil a sense of patriotism, doing their bit to keep us all ahead of the race.

So we may say that the desire to tar the old left and conservative right with the pejorative label ‘ideology’, whilst staking a non-ideological position is in fact untenable, not least because Blair erroneously assumes that one can distinguish between a ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ political doctrine according to some non-normative objective criteria. New Labour’s discourse argues that globalisation and the new global economy have fundamentally altered the domestic setting and what it is possible to achieve in it, and from this imply that political thinking has altered, now occurring in a new space as it were, a new constellation of opportunity and constraint. An objective set of circumstances now confronts all countries such that the parameters of what may be considered sensible are entirely circumscribed. Given

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<sup>73</sup> Hutton, *The State We're In*, op.cit.

<sup>74</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

this, the argument forwarded is that a ‘rational’ state will be compelled to pursue the ‘national interest’, now understood in terms of remaining ahead of the race. They will embrace this logic and as such forgo doctrines that are ideological (meaning unreceptive to the inevitable). Thus the central role of government in this period is solely “to equip the country and its people for change”.<sup>75</sup>

This account not only derives from a set of erroneous epistemological assumptions, but also naively assumes a non-constitutive role for the actors in the construction of globalisation. Recognising this constitutive dimension to social reality undermines the ontological status accorded to globalisation. Globalisation cannot be thought of as giving rise to an objective set of conditions separate from the actor’s implication in reifying (and interpreting) a particular set of processes. Recognising such ‘complicity’ results in the ‘politicising’ of the current set of processes denoted as ‘globalisation’. This means that it is not tenable to derive a non-ideological ‘pragmatic’ programme.

In summary, following a particular understanding of globalisation, New Labour attempt to ‘de-politicise’ their programme, ‘objectifying’ in its place the pursuit of the ‘national interest’. This is portrayed as being a move beyond the traditional old left and new right positions, and thus its significance resides in the fact that it is presented as superior, novel and non-ideological (assuming ideology to be a bad thing). This however is nonetheless a flawed position. It is based on an erroneous conceptualisation of globalisation ontologically as a ‘thing-in-itself’, that in turn allows for a de-politicised political agenda, which itself is unsustainable

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<sup>75</sup> Blair, Untitled speech by the Prime Minister at the World Economic Forum, (Jan 2000), op.cit.

epistemologically. Once it is recognised that globalisation, as understood by Blair, is a set of processes constituted by key agents, and sustained by a particular perspective, the process once more becomes politicised, and the aspiration to locate the role of government as one geared towards facilitating competitiveness becomes questionable, questionable that is, in light of the assertion that this remains a nominally leftist agenda.

### The Normative Dimension to Globalisation.

For New Labour, as with many of the initial proponents of the 'strong' globalisation thesis, the impact of globalisation is generally viewed as being either a neutral or good thing. Though globalisation has functioned as a compelling force precluding any alternative, contained in the New Labour understanding is also, and necessarily, a more positive normative position. This positive orientation follows not just from the liberal assumptions underlying the process, but also from the need to avoid a negative fatalism, given that the process is considered unavoidable. This positive dimension encourages people and businesses to 'embrace' the changes associated with globalisation, in order that they may all benefit from the wealth that globalisation is assumed to bring.

And in pursuing this position, a central idea of the Third Way is that the new setting allows for the reconciliation of previously antagonistic themes.<sup>76</sup> This plays down the possibility of increasing division following from the unfolding trends – as associated

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<sup>76</sup> This constitutes a recurrent theme at the heart of New Labour thinking; “[m]y vision of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is of a popular politics reconciling themes which in the past have wrongly been regarded as antagonistic – patriotism and internationalism; rights and responsibilities; the promotion of enterprise and the attack on poverty and discrimination”. Blair, ‘The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century’, op.cit. See also Gordon Brown, Fair is Efficient, (Fabian Pamphlet 563, Fabian Society, London, 1994).

with more complex accounts of globalisation – in favour of a view that stresses a sense of ‘we-ness’ forming. The aspiration of enhancing a sense of community is not assumed to be undermined by the social forces associated with the global market. Likewise, Blair rejects the view that there may exist profoundly individualistic dynamics to remaining constantly ‘ahead of the race’, and dismisses the possibility that these dynamics might work to undermine any commitment to ‘community’ as an ideal. It is assumed that, even though the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow (both globally and domestically), a sense of community nonetheless can be expected to deepen. Thus, an important element to the analysis is the presumption that globalisation is a non-divisive and progressive force.

The new changes ascribed to globalisation function to dispel any idea that the process will exacerbate economic divisions that in their turn might augment internal differences. This is perhaps where the New Labour account deviates most sharply from the more complex formulations of the second wave, which stress the dialectical nature of the unfolding process.

*Figure 4.1*

New Labour Attitude Towards Globalisation and its impact on the Domestic Realm: 1996-1999.	
Good	Neutral
Allows for the subsequent reconciliation of what was previously thought of as antagonistic elements.	Does not challenge New Labour values.
Delivers economic growth	Demands response.
Encourages a sense of ‘we-ness’.	Determines agenda.
To be embraced.	Does not exacerbate divisions

The above table summarises the essential elements to this normative appraisal discussed above. In addition to the positive assumptions listed above, a view of the ‘new times’ brought about by globalisation also leads Blair to re-evaluate what it means to be on the ‘left’. Thus Blair evokes globalisation in order to justify both the depoliticising of certain means *and* a re-examining of the values associated with the left. According to Blair, it is necessary to distil the essential values (or ends) that have always traditionally defined the moderate parliamentary left.<sup>77</sup>

It is important to recognise that discussion of what the values of New Labour are, and how they should be realised in the context of globalisation, becomes a key issue for Third Way theory. Blair needs to continue the pursuit of certain ‘values’ – constitutive of the left – but to realise these values along pragmatic lines. This is crucial in that it connects Third Way philosophy to its leftist past and as a result, the approach retains its credentials in the eyes of the left. And it is this requirement that determines a positive assessment of globalisation.

In approaching the issue, Blair distinguishes between timeless ‘ideals’ and passing fads, giving rise to the idea that Third Way politics involves ‘a voyage of re-discovery’. The realisation of these values is timeless and untouched by the changed context; the ‘outdated ideological baggage’ only referring to the old ideals of Labour and of the New Right – their ‘means’, and sometimes ‘ends’.<sup>78</sup> Each, as has been

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<sup>77</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century’, op.cit. See also Michael Temple, ‘New Labour’s Third Way: Pragmatism and Governance’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.2, No.3, October 2000, p.309.

<sup>78</sup> Blair recognises that the ‘ends’ are sometimes also mistaken; “during the 1960’s and 1970’s the left... appeared indifferent to the family and individual responsibility, which was wrong.” Tony Blair,

discussed, is negatively associated with being ‘dogmatic’, understood as rigid and meaning unresponsive to change. In contradistinction, the Third Way is understood differently, not just as being a *pragmatic response* to a given set of realities, but also as a programme where “[t]here are no ideological preconditions, no predetermined veto on means.”<sup>79</sup> As a result “[w]hat counts is what works”, but with the proviso that, “if we don’t take this attitude, change traps us, paralyses us and defeats us.”<sup>80</sup>

In offering a new foundation, a concern is then placed on distilling these essential values, which are considered to be “the belief in justice, liberty, equality of status, above all the belief that it is in a strong society of others that the needs of the individual are fulfilled”:<sup>81</sup>

The Third Way stands for a modernised social democracy, passionate in its commitment to social justice and the goals of the centre-left, but flexible, innovative and forward-looking in the means to achieve them. It is founded on the values that have guided progressive politics for more than a century – democracy, liberty, justice, mutual obligation and internationalism.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to the above list of values, additional values are cited, including: “equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility, community”<sup>83</sup>; and “fairness, justice, the equal worth and dignity of all”.<sup>84</sup> When extended to the international plane, these

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<sup>79</sup> ‘Security in a World of Change: The Politics of the New Left’, speech to the NewsCorp Leadership Conference, Hayman Island, Australia, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1995, in Blair, *New Britain*, op.cit., pp203-214.

<sup>80</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit. As with the discussion on the ‘global economy’, Blair also adopts the strategy of listing these values, avoiding the need to relate each according to a deeper underlying theory of cause and effect.

<sup>81</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way’, op.cit.

<sup>82</sup> Blair, ‘Facing The Modern Challenge’, op.cit.

<sup>83</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century’, op.cit. Quoted in Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language*, op.cit., p.46.

<sup>84</sup> Blair, ‘The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century’, op.cit.

<sup>84</sup> Tony Blair, speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research, London, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1999. Quoted in Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language*, op.cit., p.46.

values are the same as those held by the ‘international community’, and include “liberty, the rule of law, human rights, and an open society”.<sup>85</sup>

Again, the problem with arguing for this ‘list’ of values is that the approach glosses over how they are related, and how they are to be realised. Given that I have posited that ‘change’ in the form of globalisation is essentially understood here as liberalisation, it is questionable that the mechanics of the solution can be truly connected to a Labour position of the past. Furthermore, any moderate party could endorse these values in themselves, be they of the left or the right. But it is thanks to the lack of any deeper critique that Blair is able to avoid the thorny issues that would arise related to reconciling ‘fairness’ and ‘opportunity for all’.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, the different shape that these questions now take no longer problematises issues relating to the desirability and structural inadequacy of a society organised in accordance with norms associated with the ‘market society’.<sup>87</sup> And yet, in light of globalisation, the discourse is able to avoid the difficulty of providing a critique of capitalism. Blair is therefore able to retain his credentials as a left of centre reformist. Third Way thinking is, as a result, able to locate itself on the left, though now only by positing a continued adherence to a particular set of ‘ends’ or values. The means to realising these ends are not in any fundamental sense prevented by capitalism.

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<sup>85</sup> Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’, op.cit.

<sup>86</sup> For example, what opportunities does Blair have in mind in thinking about ‘opportunity for all’, and how might a more polarised set of circumstances, i.e., greater inequality, in fact be reconciled with a view of ‘fairness’ that truly aspires to equal opportunity? From the perspective of the left, it is generally held that equality of opportunity requires, if it is to be achievable, certain redistributive measures concerned with arriving at a ‘level playing field’.

This is however, at best a tenuous assumption, more an article of faith than a valid position. Blair does not provide any justification as to why we should assume that the fundamental ends that have timelessly defined the left can now be assumed to come about provided we 'embrace' globalisation, and accept the strictures that it determines. What is surprising in this discourse is the lack of debate that has been sparked concerning the nature of these values that apparently define the left in an ahistorical manner. This might in part be due to the amorphous choice of values listed.

And yet from the analysis in chapter three, a number of points can be made that would suggest that the above assumptions are perhaps too readily optimistic. Manifested as 'liberalisation', certain empirical assumptions, concerning the neutral and progressive nature of the process can be laid to rest. As liberalisation, certain individuals and institutions are favoured at the cost of others: for example, 'flexibility' is not borne equally by all.<sup>88</sup>

In positively promoting globalisation to each member of society, New Labour assumes that each can and will benefit. And yet, drawing on the complex literature, stressing as it does the dialectical nature of contemporary changes, we should not assume that change allows for a redefinition of a newly unified group, and so does not offer the possibility of reconciliation. According to Blair, all those affected by globalisation and change are no longer understood as being divided along class lines or in terms of winners and losers. Instead, all of society's individuals are depicted as

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<sup>87</sup> Lionel Jospin famously distinguished between a market economy and a market society, pointing out that the latter, though implicit in the third way, was nonetheless undesirable.

<sup>88</sup> See Richard Sennet, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, (London: W.W.Norton & Company, 1998).

being united and unified in the face of transformation and change. All are considered to potentially benefit through the novel opportunities for advancement that globalisation brings. The forces that unite them can thus now eclipse any internal divisions. The unifying glue is no longer nationality, or a common concern for security in the face of an enemy. Instead, the communitarian values of solidarity and collectivism are to be realised in a decidedly individualist manner – against the backdrop of a collective experience of change and insecurity in a global economy. Each *individual* is now united by the fact that they are all, as members of the nation-state, locked into a new competitive environment.<sup>89</sup>

This form of competition is not for security but for prosperity and continued development. As such it is non-antagonistic, in the sense that it does not develop into anything other than a benign competition - as when individuals compete with one another in any market society. The form that this competition takes is not assumed to dissolve any sense of unity. The assumption is that these developments do not cut across societies, rather they work to unite them, solidifying them in the face of change, rather than dividing them.

Yet a tension nonetheless exists between the forces of globalisation (liberalisation) and individualisation on the one hand, both of which are inextricably linked, and on the other hand the aspiration of sustaining and renewing the community as an active political ideal. In the New Labour account, these are not depicted as antithetical. However, it could be argued that individuals, located within an increasingly polarised

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<sup>89</sup> Blair, speech to the IPPR, 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1999, op.cit. A key element to the Third Way is the concept of 'individualisation'. See Giddens, *The Third Way*, op.cit; Ullrich Beck, Anthony Giddens & Scott Lash, Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order,

context, will not see their interests lying either with each other, or with companies, but rather with the smaller subgroups of 'losers' that are developing, be they economic, or given expression in ethnic, religious or environmental terms.<sup>90</sup>

This position, in line with more complex thinking on globalisation, rightly stresses the dialectical (at once unifying and fragmenting) nature of current interconnectedness. As will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, the assumptions that allow for this become increasingly tenuous, as they are confronted by the reality of counter positions, and as this position is forced to work out its own logic by turning towards the 'external' dimension to this argument.

#### Conclusion: A Preliminary Assessment of the Domestic Function and Significance of Globalisation for New Labour.

How are we then to assess the function and significance of globalisation in this period? In this chapter, I have begun to develop a critical analysis of the understanding of globalisation that has figured in the New Labour discourse, here focussing on Blair and the domestic impact globalisation is purported to have. This understanding, largely reflecting a particular view of globalisation prevalent at the time, is I argue unsatisfactory. Most obviously, it conflates globalisation with liberalisation, and as a result, tends to rather glibly assume the process to be progressive and in the interests of all. It is highly deterministic, obscure, and empirically untenable.

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(Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). See also, David Marquand, Re-inventing the Left, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

<sup>90</sup> Likewise, an increasing number of 'cosmopolitan' winners might increasingly identify with others in a same position but in other countries.

During this period, covering roughly the years 1996 to 1999, Blair consistently depicts the forces of globalisation in such a way as to suggest that the economically and politically possible is narrowed.<sup>91</sup> This narrowing can be explained by a number of factors: the disciplinary consequences of adopting certain neo-liberal premises; the structural inevitability writ into the depiction of change and globalisation as something existing ‘out there’; and the obfuscatory consequences of persistently understanding globalisation as a ‘process without a subject’, which leads to an inability to identify agency within the process. Each of the above elements is problematic. ‘Globalisation’ does not determine outcomes in the way Blair suggests. There remains, as argued in the previous chapter, considerable room for manoeuvre; choices remain, and become all the more clear once it is recognised that key agents determine the particular form that change currently takes.

Secondly, though the ‘forces’ of globalisation driving economic change are presented as inevitable, they are nonetheless considered to be progressive and potentially inclusive. Contrary to much thinking on the left, globalisation is portrayed positively – as an opportunity for all, it is not considered to be divisive. Thus, from a normative perspective, globalisation is considered a good thing that does not present any fundamental challenge to ‘the left’. Yet this is difficult to sustain. In light of a series of observable trends, one is led to the view that globalisation *qua* liberalisation, favours certain groups at the price of others. However, the significance of this particular understanding of globalisation in this respect is that Blair does not have to confront this issue; its benign nature can be assumed.

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<sup>91</sup> Hay & Watson, *Labour's Economic Policy*, op.cit., p.155.

Yet there is a further reason for the New Labour approach to stress the positive aspects to globalisation. This is because without such an approach, it would not be possible to connect with the left and the values that underpin social democracy. In other words globalisation functions to bridge a gap. This relates to an apparent antithesis: how New Labour are able to both endorse and accept the disciplinary consequences of an open neo-liberal regime and an already existent new global economy, and yet still posit that they can and do represent a valid leftist alternative.

Because they present the process as progressive and unavoidable, New Labour must eschew any critique of capitalism and the market.<sup>92</sup> However, and in order to continue to locate themselves in the leftist tradition, New Labour contend that they offer a novel (and radical) political philosophy that they label the ‘Third Way’. This functions to sustain credibility in the eyes of the left (be they traditional leftist electors, or Labour party activists and members), by arguing that the circumstances brought about on account of globalisation justifies the stance that they take. This explains why ‘globalisation’ underpins the idea of a ‘Third Way’, hence its central significance. The belief that there might exist any contradiction between acceptance of the global market and continued fidelity to leftist values is considered to be misconceived, as the new context allows for the reconciliation of many of the themes traditionally thought of as antagonistic. The context functions to allow for the reconciliation of a number of traditional antagonisms associated with the left.

Instead, antagonistic groups now find that they are *unified* in the face of change. Yet the nature of New Labour’s argument is more that these themes are not so much

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<sup>92</sup> Seen by Hall as a step too far. Stuart Hall, ‘Son of Margaret’, *New Statesman and Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1997.

reconciled as eclipsed; they are less significant once judged against the price of not responding in the appropriate way to the imminent challenge globalisation represents. It is the spectre of the alternative that in fact ‘unifies’ the country, suggesting as much a negative function to globalisation and how it is utilised.

Finally, a key conclusion that can be drawn from this phase of the analysis pertains to the constitutive nature of the process. Globalisation, though a contested idea, is ultimately constituted on the basis of ongoing interpretations, and the New Labour position towards ‘globalisation’ is highly informative in this respect. The effect of the particular New Labour orientation and understanding effectively reproduces a particular set of processes. And this is of great significance when judging and understanding the short-term significance of ‘globalisation’ in terms of its domestic impact and operation.

Acting on the basis of a particular idea of the ‘global economy’, accepted ‘on its own terms’, determines a particular ‘global logic’; in which liberalisation, openness, deregulation and flexibility become inevitable (though desirable). As a result, ‘globalisation’ functions to create and reinforce a set of circumstances that can be said to further determine their options. And this is in line with the constitutive dimension outlined here.

Thus an initial simple reading of this dynamic draws attention to the possibility that as this position becomes entrenched, then so does ‘globalisation’, with the double bind that as a result the idea increasingly resembles the very process said to be determining these policies in the first place (thus further validating such a selective

response). This however is only a possibility, and, I will argue, in the longer term an unlikely one at that, in that the domestic arguments by their nature are dependent for their success on additional factors, beyond the control of the leadership.

And so what are these additional factors? In the next chapter I draw attention to perhaps the most important consideration, and that is the function played by a particular foreign policy. The argument that is to be made is that a successful domestic 'Third Way' depends, not just upon 'globalisation' underpinning it as a force on the outside determining, and so validating a programme on the inside, but also 'globalisation' being sold in the Blairite form abroad. That is to say, the domestic and foreign orientations are co-dependent. Foreign policy becomes an increasingly important site for New Labour thinking, as it can be seen as a site that resolves certain concerns that are seen to flow from the domestic impact of the process (selectively understood).

## Chapter 5

### ‘Globalisation’ and the Formulation of New Labour Foreign Policy

*“What applies at home within a nation, applies abroad between nations. Just as citizens within a country reach out for the strength of the community to help them confront the challenge of economic and social security, so nations are coming together to promote trade and prosperity, peace and international order.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“I was very struck reading through the papers for your discussion that not all contributors showed that sense of confidence, comfort and ease about globalisation.”<sup>2</sup>*

#### Introduction

In the following chapter I will critically examine the significance of globalisation in the context of thinking about New Labour’s foreign policy. To do so, I examine the accounts of Cook and Blair who together have developed New Labour thinking in this realm, concentrating on key speeches delivered between 1998 and 2001.

I begin by relating the international with the domestic, suggesting that the issues discussed in the previous chapter in part explain the need for a particular foreign policy, different in certain respects from the past. Thus, in understanding ‘globalisation’, the analysis draws attention to how it functions between the two realms, shaping a particular argument both in content, form and orientation.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Managing Change: A National and International Agenda of Reform’, speech at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

This then draws me into a discussion of the main themes outlined by Cook and Blair, i.e., the significance globalisation has for them in terms of foreign policy formulation. In this respect I critically examine the function globalisation plays in terms of validating an ‘ethical’ policy that places human rights as a central yet unproblematic feature to foreign policy, how globalisation leads to a redefinition of sovereignty, and how globalisation allows for a qualification of the principle of non-intervention. This, it will be seen, in turn rests upon a further set of assumptions that follows from an understanding of globalisation, relating to the idea that the national and global interest coincide, and that, in light of globalisation, a universal set of values are developing, brought about thanks to a natural harmony of interests.

Finally, and in order to better make sense of this view, I draw attention to the fact that this so called ‘third way’ approach is in effect ‘solidarist’ in its orientation, drawing upon the English School of thinking about international society: implying as it does, a move beyond certain realist assumptions, whilst retaining a state centric approach. I question this approach, drawing attention to certain limitations, that I argue stem from their problematic view of globalisation. I argue that ultimately globalisation does not hold out the opportunity of adumbrating a ‘third way’ in foreign policy.

### Globalisation and the Domestic Analogy

The discourse on globalisation and change in the previous chapter entailed a reappraisal of the nature of leftist means (and arguably ends). In accepting the disciplinary

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<sup>2</sup> Robin Cook, ‘The Challenges of Globalisation’, speech to the Trilateral Commission at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

consequences of an open global economy (selectively defined), Blair argues for a wholesale rethinking of political agency. This rethink largely narrows opportunities, but also generates new areas for productive intervention.<sup>3</sup> It was seen that in moving beyond traditional left and right approaches, Blair posits an 'end of ideology' thesis, in which he contends that the novel progressive programme associated with this new approach no longer suffers from the limitations of traditional left and right thinking. Superior because the approach escapes the problem of rigidity and dogmatism, Blair also suggests that globalisation now enables certain antagonistic themes characterising the domestic realm to be reconciled.

This approach, however, reflects both a particular phase in thinking about globalisation (the 'first phase'), that uncritically accepts a 'strong thesis' account, and, focussed as it is only on its domestic significance, also constitutes a sort of 'truncated' conceptualisation. From this there follows two important factors. First, over time, we see that the strong thesis gives way to more complex conceptualisations of globalisation. Thus, to the extent that the New Labour depends on this view, it is increasingly subject to the need to be modified or changed. Second, the understanding of globalisation naturally develops to take into account the necessity of incorporating an international dimension to the programme. That is, the logic of the argument necessitates a particular position on foreign policy: 'what applies within a nation', must now 'apply abroad between nations'. Each of these features overlap, to make for a problematic set of arguments on the significance of globalisation when judged in terms of the impact it is purported to have on foreign policy.

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard I am thinking of certain 'supply side' interventions.

Thus, to begin with, for New Labour the ideas associated with the Third Way *cannot* be comprehended if thinking is spatially confined within the borders of the state. Given the ‘world as it is’, Cook and Blair posit that there is also a Third Way philosophy in foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup> According to Blair, “the forces of necessity, even of survival are driving us to co-operation.”<sup>5</sup> Solutions, at one time assumed to be found within the borders of the state, will now remain unresolved unless answers can be found in the international realm. Hence the particular understanding of globalisation (seen as the ‘driving force’ underpinning the third way), inevitably gives rise in time to a focus being placed on the international implications of globalisation. Alternatively put, in light of the domestic significance of globalisation, foreign policy formulation becomes an increasingly important ‘site’ for resolving certain issues as “[w]e can no longer separate what we want to achieve within our borders from what we face across our borders”.<sup>6</sup>

As a result, both Blair and Cook are led to formulate an agenda in which the domestic and international are increasingly inseparable. Hence the importance of the domestic analogy: according to Peter Hain, former FCO Minister of State, it is now in fact possible to talk of the end of foreign policy, “as the concept of ‘foreign’ becomes ever

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<sup>4</sup> Cook first talks of a third way in foreign policy in 1998; Robin Cook, ‘The First Year’, speech at the Mansion House, London, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1998. He then distances himself from this in November of the same year; Robin Cook, *New Statesman*, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1998. Blair first discusses a ‘third way’ in foreign policy in a speech at the beginning of 1999 in South Africa; Tony Blair, ‘Facing the Modern Challenge: the Third Way in Britain and South Africa’, Cape Town, South Africa, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1999. See Mark Wickham-Jones, ‘Labour’s Trajectory in Foreign Affairs: The Moral Crusade of a Pivotal Power?’, in Richard Little & Mark Wickham-Jones, (eds.), *New Labour’s Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade?*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2000), p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Third Way’, speech given to the French Assembly, France, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Tony Blair, ‘A New Era of International Partnership’, speech to the 53<sup>rd</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1998.

harder to contemplate".<sup>7</sup> And this draws attention to thinking, not just about the status that globalisation now gives to foreign policy as an important site, but also how it shapes the actual content and form that the argument can now take.

Blair and Cook believe that what is required is the 'will' and 'vision' to chart a new course within this apparently novel context; to be open to new ideas and to no longer remain wedded to outdated ways of thinking. In contrast to the conservative forces, inherently incapable of dealing with the novelty of the times, the 'progressive' approach of the centre and centre left is well placed. Both believe that it is the left that is in fact uniquely qualified to rise to the challenge because "[i]t is parties of the left of centre, with their preference for collective solutions, who are better fitted to understand and operate in the modern multilateral world".<sup>8</sup> By way of contrast, the reactionary 'forces of the right', unlike the 'progressive forces of the left', remain "hopelessly and touchingly to an outdated model of the nation state in isolation".<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the view that one simply responds according to the 'logic of the international system', both instead stress a proactive, constitutive role for policy, moving beyond the confines of a '*narrow realpolitik*', and paradoxically lending a 'left' and 'right' twist to policy in its place (at a time when it transcended domestically).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Hain, 'The End of Foreign Policy?', speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Cook, 'The Challenges of Globalisation', op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Robin Cook, 'British Foreign Policy', Locarno Suite, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1997. On the 'logic' of the international system see Barry Buzan, Richard Little & Charles Jones, The Logic of Anarchy: Neo-Realism to Structural Realism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

In more substantive terms, drawing attention to the argumentative form as well as content key, themes developed by Blair in thinking about globalisation in the domestic realm are translated into thinking about the international realm. The metaphor of the marketplace gives rise to thinking in terms of 'competition' and 'co-operation'. Just as the need to be competitive defines a role for the government on the supply side, it also functions as a metaphor for the manner in which 'states without enemies' now interact.<sup>11</sup> The principle concern of states in light of globalisation is that they continually seek to maintain a competitive advantage on the shifting sands of the global marketplace.

States that will be successful in an era of globalisation will be those that adopt particular ways: those of a 'progressive' modern state. 'Progressive' means that they must accept the market, certain strictures of accountability, individual freedoms and liberty. Where a state exercises just such measures, it is no longer seen as a potential enemy but is rather more likely to be a partner for co-operation and a benign competitor. And these strictures are made all the more palatable as they are represented as being not so much political values or Western mores, but common sense responsive measures given the reality of the world as it now is. The objective quality to context thus enables Blair and Cook to espouse these measures as if they are universal and not parochial.

Success in an age of globalisation holds out not just the promise of a more benign political environment, but also the prospect of dealing with problems pertaining to the natural environment. In pursuing the goal of economic growth - that is in embracing

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<sup>11</sup> Ulrich Beck, The Re-Invention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

globalisation - the required dynamism functions to promote democratisation and accountability. This follows because a dynamic economy requires incentives and creativity, which in turn demands ever-greater personal freedom.<sup>12</sup> A harmony of interests develops out of this new context, so that as nation-states each respond, ever-greater levels of co-operation and collective problem solving are expected. As in the domestic realm, the challenges represented by globalisation are resoundingly positive; the forces associated with globalisation are not seen to exacerbate conflict and insecurity. On the contrary, they set up a dynamic that will allow for the solution of new problems, unique to an 'age of globalisation'. Globalisation, on this view, serves to unify states, as it does individuals, confronting and embracing change.

Britain is presented as being like any other nation-state in the global age, having the same concerns and interests as any other state (excepting certain 'rogue' states). As with individuals in the domestic setting, *each state not only experiences globalisation and change in the same way, but is also as a result compelled to respond in essentially similar ways*. This response, one of liberalisation and openness, is not seen to be a particularly British or Western diagnosis. Rather, the New Labour diagnosis is seen as a view that in a fundamental sense could be endorsed by any nation-state struggling with the impact of globalisation. It is, as with the approach advocated domestically, effectively neutral and not 'ideological'.

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<sup>12</sup> Robin Cook, 'The Influence of Ideas of 1989 On Foreign Policy', speech given at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics and Political Science, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

As in the domestic realm, the form that the argument takes is to posit that ‘antagonistic’ themes are ‘reconciled’. The national interest is no longer seen as being opposed to a ‘global interest’. British ‘values’ are seen to be in harmony with the values of the ‘international community’, which are themselves synonymous with universal values. In this political philosophy, the concept of interests becomes more capacious. British interests equate with the interests of the international community, they are held by all individual members of this community, and are not exclusively or primarily about security. The pursuit of human rights for example, are no longer potentially subversive of harmonious relations between states concerned with pursuing economic interests, but rather are increasingly seen to be in the global interest. The same applies to promoting democracy and greater accountability. Thus, on this view, globalisation works to undermine any *fundamental* conflict of issues amongst members of the international community. ‘Fundamental’ here, implies the potential to move beyond the *realpolitik* of yesteryear. The active pursuit of solutions to particular problems associated with globalisation work to encourage ever-greater solidarity in the international domain, rather than ignite tensions or fuel potential conflicts.

And though there are obvious parallels between this view, and earlier ‘Utopian’ or ‘Liberal Idealist’ accounts such as proffered by the likes of Leonard Woolf, Blair and Cook stress the novelty of the situation, assuming as they do, that globalisation is historically unprecedented; thus rejecting the sceptical position on globalisation.<sup>13</sup> That

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<sup>13</sup> See David Long & Peter Wilson, Thinkers of the Twenty Years Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).

is, the process is not agent driven, but a given. It therefore changes the rules of the game as it changes the context in which action is now undertaken.

So, the traditional antagonisms reflected in differing national interests ‘fuse’. A symbiosis occurs, whereby the global and the national interest increasingly become the same thing. This has the effect of depoliticising much of what is associated with the national interest.<sup>14</sup> The benefit, that now, pursuing the UK’s interests, what Williams refers to as ‘traditional British foreign policy practices’, is the same as pursuing a set of interests that are global, and therefore universal.<sup>15</sup>

Thus replicating the idea of a move beyond left and right in the domestic realm, Blair and Cook argue that we can now also move beyond two positions in the international realm. That is we can move beyond the now dated ‘realist’ and ‘idealist’ stances. This has unsurprisingly drawn considerable attention.<sup>16</sup>

In an important analysis of New Labour’s foreign policy, Wheeler and Dunne posit that this represents “a marked shift”, not least because it results in a move away from any consensus between the parties concerning the nature of the international realm.<sup>17</sup> Hitherto, the conceptual landscape determined that disputes were conducted in terms of the binary division of realist pragmatism and a more cosmopolitan idealism. Now, it is

<sup>14</sup> Robin Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and National Interest’, speech by the Foreign Secretary to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Williams, ‘The Rise and Fall of the ‘Ethical’ Dimension’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol.15, No.1, 2002, p.53.

<sup>16</sup> See the series of discussions in Little and Wickham-Jones, *New Labour’s Foreign Policy*, op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas J Wheeler & Tim Dunne, ‘Good International Citizenship: A Third Way for British Foreign Policy’, *International Affairs*, Vol.74, No.4, 1998, p.850.

claimed, Cook and New Labour are beginning to forge a ‘new direction’, which, though problematic, is nonetheless to be commended.<sup>18</sup> Wheeler and Dunne point to five areas of particular significance: first, “the desire to project a different identity”; second “the new language of international relations adopted”; third “an ethical dimension”; fourth “human rights as a central element”; and fifth “the widening and opening of the policy process”.<sup>19</sup>

However, though recognising the profundity of ‘globalisation’ to New Labour thinking, Dunne and Wheeler principally concern themselves with working out a more systematic theory to facilitate rigorously applying an ethical dimension (that is practicing a third way) to British foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> They do not consider the particular role ‘globalisation’ has to play in relation to the above. This is a shortcoming, because it is a specific understanding of globalisation, and certain attendant assumptions derived from it, that allows for the possibility of discussing a ‘third way’ in international affairs. That is, globalisation performs an important function with regards to the ethical dimension, human rights, and perhaps most significantly the new language.<sup>21</sup>

In summary, the initial focus on globalisation, concerned though it is, with the domestic significance, nonetheless subsequently shapes the approach taken to understanding its foreign policy implications, and opens up new possibilities. Given the domestic position,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. On ethics and foreign policy, see Paul Keal, (ed.), *Ethics and Foreign Policy*, (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Chris Brown, ‘On the Relationship between Ethics and Foreign Policy’, paper presented to the ‘Ethics and Foreign Policy’ workshop, University of Bristol, 8-9 June 1999.

foreign policy becomes an important site, with the boundaries of the two now blurred. A domestic analogy is drawn, whereby the context, both domestic and international, is increasingly similar, in that regardless of differences, the key issue faced is dealing with (responding to) globalisation. This, it is suggested, eclipses both the realist and idealist position (as it eclipses the old left and right position), and offers a third way in its place. I now turn to examine in greater detail, some of these issues, focusing on a number of key speeches.

#### Foreign Policy in an Age of Globalisation

From the analysis hitherto undertaken, I have argued that globalisation does not give rise to a universal experience, and is not a 'thing-in-itself'. As such, its current form is asymmetrical in impact. In being constituted by the ongoing interpretations of key agents, the current processes denoted as globalisation are therefore likely to reflect certain power differentials. Finally, in largely being synonymous with liberalisation, in many respects the process exacerbates economic division. We may, therefore, say that globalisation does not imply a global logic, nor does it suggest the same mixture of remedial policy responses.

In this next section I will critically examine in greater detail a number of the key themes articulated in various speeches concerned with globalisation, and judge the position in light of the above. For purposes of clarity I have divided these themes into a number of sub-sections. These areas refer to: (1) the need for greater co-operation and enlightened

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<sup>21</sup> Williams points out that by September 2000, an increasingly beleaguered Cook had all but stopped using the term 'ethical dimension' as a means of presenting foreign policy. Williams, *The Rise and Fall of*

engagement, giving rise to the possibility of pursuing a more ethically responsible position; (2) the need for a reappraisal of the national interest, which in the process leads to a redefinition of sovereignty, and holds to the possibility of moving beyond an essentially *realpolitik* position; and (3) the need for a more robust and far-reaching normative consensus on the values that unite the international community.

#### *Pursuing an 'Ethical Agenda' in Age of Globalisation*

In a speech given to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in January 2000, Cook outlines four ‘guiding principles’ to help shape foreign policy and realise the national interest ‘in a world changed by globalisation’.<sup>22</sup> At the heart of the speech is an attempt to integrate thinking about globalisation into traditional thinking about realising the national interest. This is done in order to move beyond what Cook believes is an anachronistic approach to foreign policy that has to date been stuck in the past.<sup>23</sup> To promote the national interest, Cook argues that we must “understand the modern world, and produce a strategy that relates to the world as it will be in this new century, not as it was in the last”.<sup>24</sup> Central to this is an appreciation of globalisation. According to Cook, “[g]lobalisation requires more bridges and fewer barriers”.<sup>25</sup> But more than this, as a result of globalisation, “the global interest is becoming the national interest” and “the global community needs universal values”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *the Ethical Dimension*, op.cit., pp59-62.

<sup>23</sup> Cook. ‘Foreign Policy and National Interest’, op.cit., emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> There is a certain irony here, in that New Labour set up an alternative Foreign Policy Centre because they felt that the RIIA was increasingly anachronistic in its orientation.

<sup>25</sup> Cook. ‘Foreign Policy and National Interest’, op.cit.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

The allusion to bridge building, in the words of Cook, is an allusion to the need for states to accept the “norms of international behaviour” and to constructively engage.<sup>27</sup> On this account, the norms of international society are given strength as a result of the ineluctable imperatives of the globalisation process. Dialogue becomes central, as globalisation “foreshortens the landscape of diplomacy”, throwing “us into intimate and frequent contact with other civilisations”.<sup>28</sup> Cook argues that, as a result, states will find it increasingly difficult to remain closed off from the international community. Thus, concomitantly, ‘globalisation’ also “removes barriers”.<sup>29</sup>

This position is significant in that it amounts to something more ambitious than a call for increased contact in response to greater interdependence. According to Cook, globalisation not only spurs a need for greater dialogue, but generates a set of conditions that offers a unique opportunity for the potential coming together of the international community. This is because that which they now share in common unites the community in ways that are more significant than anything that had hitherto divided them.

For Cook, a policy of critical engagement refers to “the pursuit of political dialogue wherever it can produce benefits”.<sup>30</sup> Globalisation however, means that it is increasingly likely that beneficial consequences will ensue. Britain will pursue dialogue with all nation-states “without illusions about the regimes with which we negotiate”.<sup>31</sup> Here Cook has in mind certain states that deviate from any ‘ideal’ norm. Cook cites the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

examples of Argentina, Cuba, Iran, Libya and Russia to illustrate his point. On each occasion, Cook argues that it has proven more beneficial to establish contact and constructively engage. This policy is represented as a pragmatic approach that balances the need to engage with the need to make clear British dissatisfaction when necessary. As Little points out, “[d]ialogue is postulated as a Third Way between ‘kowtowing’ to another regime and ‘rowing’”.<sup>32</sup> This is also extended to the arena of ‘civilisational dialogue’, with the example of Europe and the Middle East.

Cook argues that the benefits that accrue from such a policy are clear. Not only does it enable Britain to secure greater prosperity through opening up the possibility of greater trade; it also enhances the universal values of human rights. On this view, it is held that Britain can promulgate an ethical agenda at the same time as it pursues its economic and commercial interests. This ties in with the much-publicised ‘ethical dimension’ of New Labour’s foreign policy outlined in New Labour’s mission statement.

Upon coming to power, Cook launched a mission statement for his department. This statement outlined four ‘goals’ for foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> These goals concern the pursuit of security, prosperity, quality of life and more controversially mutual respect. In a much quoted passage relating to the last goal, Cook claims that “[t]he Labour government does not accept that political values can be left behind when we check in our passports to travel on diplomatic business. Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Little, ‘Conclusions: the Ethics and the Strategy of Labour’s Third Way in Foreign policy’, in Little & Wickham-Jones, *New Labour’s Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.256.

<sup>33</sup> Cook, ‘British Foreign Policy’, op.cit.

must support the demands of other peoples for democratic rights on which we insist ourselves.”<sup>34</sup> Central to this ethical dimension then, and as the *Annual Report on Human Rights* stressed, is the issue of human rights. These are “not an add-on or a sidelined appendage, but an integral part of the way we see the world”.<sup>35</sup> For Cook, human rights issues constitute “one of the legs upon which foreign policy stands”.<sup>36</sup>

At first sight this dimension to thinking about the national interest might appear to augment the difficulty of engaging in dialogue with other states. A policy of critical engagement not only involves espousing a commitment to human rights, but also requires an undertaking from other states to positively respond. As one commentator has it, “[t]aking a tough moral stand in such cases may mean sacrificing export orders and jobs at home. That is a legitimate choice, but one which the government must have the political courage to defend if its approach is to be credible”.<sup>37</sup> This reflects ‘traditional thinking’ according to Cook, which holds that an approach of ‘critical engagement’ can only serve to alienate certain states, and as a result jeopardise the possibility of fully realising the other goals of security and wealth creation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. For an account of the response to Cook’s launch of this ‘ethical dimension’ see Mark Wickham-Jones, *Labour’s Trajectory in Foreign Affairs*, op.cit., pp3-32.

<sup>35</sup> FCO and DFID, *Annual Report On Human Rights* (London: TSO, 1998), p.5. Of course Cook is not the first person to include human rights as an important consideration. See Sally Morphet, ‘British Foreign Policy and Human Rights: From Low to High Politics’, in David Forsythe, (ed.), Human Rights and Comparative Foreign Policy, (Tokyo: UN University, 2000); Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the ‘Ethical’ Dimension*, op.cit, pp55-56.

<sup>36</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee, Foreign Policy and Human Rights, first report, HC369 (London: TSO, 1998), p.162. Quoted in Davina Miller, ‘British Foreign Policy, Human Rights and Iran’, in Wickham-Jones & Little, *New Labour’s Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.187. See also Robin Cook, ‘Human Rights- A Priority of Britain’s Foreign Policy’, speech delivered at the Foreign Office, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Financial Times, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1997, quoted in Mark Wickham-Jones, ‘Introduction’ in *New Labour’s Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.10.

<sup>38</sup> In fact the presumption of novelty is seen to be somewhat disingenuous. See Douglas Hurd, ‘Foreign Policy and Human Rights’, Foreign Affairs Committee, Minutes of Evidence, 16 December 1997, p.25. Ken Booth, ‘Exporting Ethics in Place of Arms’, Times Higher Education Supplement, 7<sup>th</sup> November

According to Cook, the altered context associated with globalisation now renders anachronistic any ‘either/or’ trade off of national goals. Cook sees no contradiction between promoting British values on the one hand, and pursuing British interests on the other because, “[i]n the global age it is in Britain’s national interest to promote British values of freedom and democracy”.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the idea that the British national interest and ‘global interests’ can be the same thing is not an entirely new phenomenon. Frankel, writing of the period before the Second World War, believed “[t]he outstanding characteristic of British foreign policy and diplomacy is found in what Sir Harold Nicholson called its ‘civilian’ character... It was possible to assume... that what was good for the world was good for Britain, which amounted in fact to saying also that what was good for Britain was good for the world”.<sup>40</sup>

This position is once more made tenable because it is now assumed that the national interest increasingly approximates a global interest, both of which are understood in terms of the imperatives derived from globalisation and the global knowledge economy. The argument takes the following form: the novel context generates a universal set of requirements following on from a universal set of experiences, that allow for meaningful constructive dialogue, and provide a strong impetus in the long term for the resolution of

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1997. Tony Baldry, ‘New Labour, New Foreign Policy? A Conservative Perspective’, *Oxford International Review*, Vol.9, No.1, 1998/99, pp31-3.

<sup>39</sup> Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and the National Interest’, op.cit.

any disagreements. The significance of greater interconnectedness is that it provides a greater legitimacy for raising human rights issues, because, as with a number of other issues, they are now located within a context that vitiates particularistic difficulties.

These ‘particularistic’ difficulties, which have dogged human rights discussions for many decades, relate to the status of human rights not only as a foreign policy issue, but also ‘ontologically’, and explain why the human rights debate is frequently seen as inherently Western, especially by non-Western actors.<sup>41</sup> On this view, at heart, the idea of a human ‘right’ is an essentially western construct, reflecting a modern liberal position on the relation between the individual and society that can be traced back to the enlightenment and beyond. In dealing with this dilemma, Cook now posits that human rights issues can be promoted on a differing (though complimentary) basis to one of conviction.

Three elements to this argument are central here. Firstly, globalisation is experienced universally, as a homogenising process ‘out there’. Secondly, this compels a similar set of changes in each of the (essentially homogenous) entities globalisation impacts upon (in this case, states). Thirdly, underlying this view is an economic argument again derived from the interpretation of globalisation and the new global environment. Cook posits that human rights issues and issues of freedom and democracy are now linked to

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Frankel, British Foreign Policy 1945-73. (Royal Institute of International Affairs/ Oxford University Press: London, 1975), pp119-20. Quoted in Mark Curtis, The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945, (Zed Books Ltd: London, 1995), p.2.

<sup>41</sup> See Raymond J. Vincent, Human Rights and International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

economic growth in a knowledge-based (that is global) economy. According to Cook, “[r]espect for human rights is not a luxury of growth, but the condition of that growth”:<sup>42</sup>

Regimes which govern their citizens by fear and repression cannot expect the same people to display the creativity and innovation in the workplace which are essential for a knowledge-based economy.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, in promoting values associated with human rights, democracy, open and transparent government and the rule of law ('British' values), one is not only promoting rights which are seen (for Cook) as universal (a contentious point), they are now moreover, values that are increasingly becoming a precondition for economic growth. Therefore, it is in the interests of all nation-states to respect such rights.<sup>44</sup> And reinforcing this position, the actions governing the state are predetermined in light of a contextual postulate that, given the agentless conceptualisation of globalisation, is, to all intents and purposes, neutral. Thus, as with the domestic context, such a response is depoliticised.

There are however significant limitations to this argument, specifically in respect of the erroneous view of globalisation, and its association with a particular economic argument. This Cookean view fails to recognise that *qua* liberalisation, the process favours some at the expense of others, creating winners and losers, in certain instances exacerbating inequalities, fragmenting as well as unifying communities, and where a policy of openness, deregulation and liberalisation are proffered, potentially hindering

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<sup>42</sup> Cook, 'Foreign Policy and the National Interest', op.cit.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See also Robin Cook, 'Human Rights – A Priority of Britain's Foreign Policy', London, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2001; John Battle, 'Human Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Global Responsibility', speech to Human Rights Commission, Geneva, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2001.

development.<sup>45</sup> It is a position that in fact silences the heterogeneity of entities impacted by 'partial' liberalisation, playing down the extent to which this heterogeneity may call for differing approaches, that is some cases call for forms of 'protectionism'.

The assumption is made that all states (or elites of regimes) wish to 'develop', and that the path to development follows a trajectory whose ultimate destination is understood to resemble the UK economy - whereby wealth is generated as a result of exploiting the skills demanded of a 'knowledge-based economy'.<sup>46</sup> This teleological version of development assumes that globalisation will encourage all economies to become 'knowledge-based', and that this process is achieved through a particular kind of (partial) liberalisation.<sup>47</sup> Should an economy thus not emulate this ideal however, or if it were the case that globalisation (selectively understood) does not lead to a knowledge-based economy, then the above view would not hold. As a result, relations with that country, for example in terms of pursuing commercial interests, will once more be potentially antithetical to the pursuit of human rights as a policy commitment.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Rob Dixon & Paul Williams, 'Tough on Debt, Tough on the Causes of Debt? New Labour's Third Way Foreign Policy', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.3, No.2, June 2001, pp150-172. The relationship between economic growth, globalisation and development will be examined in chapter seven.

<sup>46</sup> See Rita Abrahamson & Paul Williams, 'Ethics and Foreign Policy: The Antinomies of New Labour's "Third Way" in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Political Studies*, Vol.49, No.2, 2001, pp249-264.

<sup>47</sup> That is, opening one's economy and specialising - given the constraint of high agricultural subsidies remaining in the US and Europe.

<sup>48</sup> Cook argues that this policy reaps benefits in other respects as well, for example in terms of security and the environment. This follows a similar line of reasoning. A democratically accountable polity is less likely to be an aggressive state, or a state that ignores environmental issues. "Governments which respect freedom of expression are more likely to provide the transparency to be secure trading partners. Countries which observe the rule of law at home, are more likely to accept their international obligations to fight the drugs trade or halt weapons proliferation. Promoting our values enhances our prosperity, and reinforces our security". Cook, 'Foreign Policy and the National Interest', op.cit.

And in terms of actual changes on the ground, the idea that one can pursue both an ethical human rights policy as a central policy plank whilst not compromising UK commercial interests has, at best, remained only partially successful. In its auditing of New Labour's position for example, Amnesty International concluded that the Department of Trade and Industry is "not meeting its responsibility to promote trade in a manner not harmful to human rights".<sup>49</sup>

Cook's position nonetheless is that a new historical epoch at the international level is coming into being, in which British values can confidently be espoused because they take on the status of being grounded in a global interest, and are thus not compromised ethically. This follows from the belief that certain realist conclusions associated with the anarchic nature of international politics are now increasingly less applicable. Thus it is to this idea that I now turn, because, as we shall see, it draws heavily on a particular reading of the consequences of globalisation.

### *The Global and the National Interest*

A second 'guiding principle', helping to shape foreign policy and realise the national interest in a world changed by globalisation, stems from an increasing 'coincidence' of

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<sup>49</sup> Amnesty International, 'Human Rights Audit of UK Foreign and Asylum Policy', sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 1999. For a critical appraisal of New Labour's ethical dimension with respect to Iran, see Davina Miller, *British Foreign Policy, Human Rights and Iran*, op.cit, pp186-200. On their approach to China, Indonesia and East Timor, see Dunne & Wheeler, *Good International Citizenship*, op.cit. For a broader set of criticisms with respect to New Labour's record on arms sales, see Neil Cooper, 'Arms Exports, New Labour and the Pariah Agenda', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol.21, No.3, 2000, pp54-77. On New Labour's human rights record in conjunction with the European Union and with respect to China, see Anne Deighton, 'European Union Policy', in Anthony Seldon, (ed.), *The Blair Effect*, (London: Little, Brown, 2001), pp331-353; and Angela Bourne & Michelle Cini, 'Exporting the Third Way in Foreign Policy: New Labour, the European Union and Human Rights Policy', in Little and Wickham-Jones, *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, op.cit., pp179-83.

national and global interests. According to Cook, “our national interest will more and more coincide with the global interest”.<sup>50</sup> As a result it is no longer correct to think in terms of the ‘old balance of power’, zero sum game. A particular version of globalisation plays a central role in this respect. Firstly, Cook and Blair are led to a redefinition of sovereignty following this understanding, with ‘globalisation’ legitimising this new stance. Secondly, in articulating such a view, New Labour move away from the minimal ‘values’ of non-intervention and sovereignty, stressing instead the need for a more profound form of unity, one that in fact displays certain ‘solidarist’ features in its orientation.<sup>51</sup>

### *1. Redefining Sovereignty*

Challenging a view he associates with realists such as Morgenthau, Cook argues that the world is not “a jungle in which the only guiding star is unilateral self-interest”.<sup>52</sup> Rather, there now exists a global set of interests stemming from the need to avoid turmoil in the financial markets and curtail the spread of the drugs trade, the need to inhibit the proliferation of nuclear and chemical and biological weapons, as well as the need to co-operate on issues pertaining to the environment:<sup>53</sup>

[t]oday the more immediate challenges to our national interests are likely to be transnational forces...There is no greater national duty than the defence of our shoreline. But the most immediate threat to it today is the encroaching sea, rising as a result of climate change which we can manage only by global action.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and the National Interest’, op.cit.

<sup>51</sup> This concept will be elaborated later in the chapter.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. See Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Amongst Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Revised by Kenneth T. Thompson, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993).

<sup>53</sup> Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and National Interest’, op.cit..

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

In place of a realist position that stresses unilateral self-interest, Cook argues for an approach that is guided by ‘enlightened self-interest’. This requires that a country recognise that its national interest can only be realised through multilateral bodies, as ‘the global interest’ cannot successfully be pursued alone.

Speaking in 1999, Blair makes it clear why there needs to be a more flexible understanding of the term sovereignty.<sup>55</sup> According to Blair, ‘economics’ have transformed the world and led to a “sudden shift in the international political agenda.”<sup>56</sup> However for Blair, “globalisation is not just economic, it is a political and security phenomenon”.<sup>57</sup> This marks an important development in Blair’s approach towards globalisation. Indeed it represents a shift towards a more capacious and less ‘truncated’ analysis, incorporating the implications of globalisation for thinking about the international realm.

Not only is economics now ‘global’, but so also is politics and security. As a result, “in every sphere, increasingly nations are having to accept they can only advance their own interests by working with others”.<sup>58</sup> What is more, because the forces associated with globalisation will increase in significance; “[o]ur prosperity and our security will become increasingly interdependent”.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role For Britain in the World’, speech delivered at the Guildhall, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1999.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’ speech to the club of Chicago, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Cook, ‘The Challenges of Globalisation’, op.cit.

In response to this situation, Blair is compelled to offer a picture of increased multilateral co-operation as a significant part of the solution, which involves compromise on an increasingly profound agenda at an intergovernmental level. Co-operation is crucial. Though the forces associated with globalisation are essentially 'neutral' (disembodied), and universally beneficial, they still require by way of response a degree of governmental intervention. Though, on the economic front, protectionism 'makes no sense', there still remains an important role to be played by governments in securing interests in the political and security realm.

This leads Blair and Cook to a redefinition or modification of the concept of sovereignty, whereby sovereignty is strengthened when 'pooled'. Contrary to the strong thesis associated with the likes of Ohmae, globalisation does not necessarily undermine or 'hollow out' the state, rendering it functionally obsolete.<sup>60</sup> Government can still play a decisive role.

The position is also held up in contrast to the 'realist' position. According to Cook, this view holds that "foreign policy [is] a zero sum game, with advantage to one player automatically resulting in disadvantage to another."<sup>61</sup> Such a view "expresses the objective of foreign policy as an equilibrium of opposing forces in which the greatest threat to the national interest [comes] from other nations".<sup>62</sup> By way of contrast, both Cook and Blair reposition the New Labour view of the state in light of their

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<sup>60</sup> There is, perhaps unsurprisingly, an extensive literature on globalisation and sovereignty. For a review of this literature, see Anthony McGrew & David Held, (eds.), The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate, (Mald. Mass.: Polity Press, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> Cook, 'Foreign Policy and the National Interest', op.cit.

understanding of the ‘modern world’ such that a multilateral approach now functions to *strengthen* sovereignty. In line with liberal theory, the idea of a zero sum game is dismissed, and in its place is the view that all potentially gain from the cooperation that follows from ‘pooling’.

According to Blair, the view that holds that governments do not have a role to play in globalisation is associated with those who argue for a unilateral position, and conflate national sovereignty with independence and isolation.<sup>63</sup> He argues that this view is particularly prevalent in the British media, and ‘extreme’ left and right groups:<sup>64</sup>

In Europe and America, there are some who argue that the end of the Cold War in fact opens the door to a new era of national sovereignty. They argue that, without common threat, nation states can again afford to withdraw from international commitments, to act unilaterally rather than in partnership. They believe that governments don’t have a role in globalisation, that this can and should be left solely to the markets. To these advocates of unilateralism and isolation, sovereignty is finite.<sup>65</sup>

Blair unequivocally posits that “it is wrong”, because it erroneously,

defines national sovereignty as standing alone and then confuses it with national strength. And it grossly underestimates the impact of globalisation on the power of an individual nation state. If sovereignty means control over one’s destiny and strength, then strength and control, in today’s world, means forging alliances or falling behind.<sup>66</sup>

It is only “[b]y working together [that] nation states [can] collectively reclaim the sovereignty they lost to globalisation while reaping its benefits”.<sup>67</sup> As with the ‘row’ or ‘kowtow’ option, Blair also adopts this ‘either/or’ strategy to define and locate this

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role for Britain in the World’, op.cit.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

argument. In this case he defines his position against the previous understanding, which he claims only allows for ‘isolation’ or loss of strength and sovereignty.

Blair locates this redefinition within the context of globalisation, and yet is clear that globalisation *does* undermine sovereignty, and will continue to do so, *should a government operate on the basis of an outdated view of the meaning of that term*. But in altering the meaning of the term, away from any outdated ‘finite’ understanding, globalisation no longer poses a threat to sovereignty, and so any pejorative connotations to the process can be dismissed accordingly.<sup>68</sup>

However, one is lead to question the validity of a strategy that posits a solution to the ‘problem of sovereignty’ by simply offering a redefinition of the meaning of the term, to mean ‘control over one’s destiny’. What is more, this redefinition also draws attention to the problematic assumption that, given the particular understanding of globalisation, it is still possible to control one’s destiny. This position is particularly problematic when judged as a perspective applicable to *all* states in an era of globalisation. When examined, such a view in fact draws attention to the British interests that such an account (disproportionately) favours.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> This draws attention to an ambiguity if not contradiction in Blair’s own position – doubtless reflecting his developing thoughts on the subject. In focussing on the domestic consequences of globalisation, the discourse suggests responding to an inevitable and unavoidable process, and accepting it ‘on its own terms’. Yet now Blair moves to a position that stresses how sovereignty is lost on this view, suggesting, in the process, that this is a bad thing.

In order to forge onwards, and ‘reclaim’ any lost sovereignty, Blair and Cook advocate a policy that seeks multilateral co-operation on an increasing number of issues of an ever-more profound kind. This is ‘sold’ domestically in terms of the idea that Britain is well placed because it is able to punch above its weight. New Labour advocates a policy that exploits Britain’s unique position as a ‘pivotal’ power, geared towards “building strength and shaping the future”.<sup>69</sup> Blair addresses this issue in a speech entitled ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role for Britain in the World’.<sup>70</sup> Two elements in particular are worth highlighting from this speech; one ideational, the other more pragmatic. Each draws attention to the fact that the redefinition in its turn must be sold abroad, and in a particular form.

This first ideational element stresses the importance of the debate on Third Way thinking, which Blair argues Britain is at the forefront in developing. This so-called ‘global Third Way’ debate is significant in its attempt to forge a particular consensus on dealing with (and understanding in a particular way) globalisation and change.<sup>71</sup> Concerned with convincing others of the particular conceptualisation of globalisation to which the likes of Blair hold, the view holds to an economicistic understanding of globalisation as a ‘thing-in-itself’, something that everyone benefits from, and as such, a thing that cannot (and should not) be resisted. In other words globalisation is something that universally entails further liberalisation.

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<sup>69</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role for Britain in the world’, speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet, Guildhall, London 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1999.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> See Anthony Giddens, (ed.), The Global Third Way Debate, (Malden Mass.: Polity Press, 2001).

What is important to recognise in this respect, is that the third way programme depends for its success on this shared outlook, reflecting the fact that “[i]deas matter. Political debate and intellectual debate matters. Because today’s ideas become tomorrow’s jobs, tomorrow’s schools, tomorrow’s living standard’s, literally tomorrow’s world”.<sup>72</sup>

But, as suggested earlier, Britain is particularly fortunate, because:

Britain is at the forefront of the debate about new ideas in modern progressive politics. There is a real interest in Britain abroad today, and we have to turn that to our advantage.<sup>73</sup>

Such a position in certain respects comes close to the sort of conceptualisation of globalisation that this thesis has argued for, that is one sensitive to the importance of the interpretation of globalisation, and its significance as a constituted process. The success of Third Way theory (domestic and international), as tacitly recognised here, stands or falls on the ability of Blair and others to convince the wider international community of the validity of the diagnosis that they propound. Should they fail in this task, then so will the ability of Third Way theory fail to offer any ‘third way’.

This goes to the very heart of points made at the beginning of the thesis. Ideas do indeed matter, though in a more fundamental sense than that they create tomorrow’s jobs and schools. They play a constitutive role. They not only demarcate that which is seen to be possible from that which is not, but in laying claims to truth within structured contexts, ideas also function to produce and reproduce a world in this image. *Globalisation, as an idea, one that grounds Blair’s Third Way, must, in order to be effective, be accepted as*

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

*correct and true.* It must be understood as a process that determines a particular set of responses (opportunities) and must not be seen as a threat (thus eliciting ‘closure’).

This brings us to the second more ‘pragmatic’ corollary of this point, drawing attention to the fact that Britain is doubly fortunate, in that it also benefits from its ‘pivotal status’, which confers upon Britain a unique opportunity to direct and manage globalisation and change, that is ‘control its destiny’. Blair draws attention to a unique set of strengths and connections, including:

our formidable network of international contacts. Our extraordinary close relations with nations in every part of the globe through the commonwealth. Our membership of the UN Security Council, of NATO and of the G 8. The close relationship forged through two world wars and the Cold War with the USA. And our crucial membership of the European Union. We are at the pivot of all these inter-connecting alliances and groupings.<sup>74</sup>

This is further reinforced by the excellence of the armed forces and by British values, which include certain democratic credentials, tolerance, an ‘outward-looking’ bias and a multi-cultural populace.<sup>75</sup> However, Blair, as with Cook, assumes that the direction this takes is mutually beneficent, that is, ‘what is good for Britain is good for the world’.

It is now possible to return to the argument that ‘pooling’ in the face of globalisation does not undermine sovereignty. Though globalisation undermines sovereignty ‘traditionally understood’, in the context of the UK fears are allayed because Britain is both at the forefront of ideas on how to deal with this new agenda as well as being rather well placed thanks to a particular conjunction of historical factors. ‘Pooling’ thus

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<sup>73</sup> Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role’, op.cit.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

becomes one respect in which agency is reclaimed in the face of globalisation. It is sold as an idea, thanks to the fact that Britain is able to exercise a degree of control.

However, the analysis of agency here is largely confined to the British situation, with the subsequent assumption being that the ‘destiny’ pursued by Britain is nonetheless a common destiny. To the extent that this is the case, the argument holds water. However, where British interests deviate from the interests of others then the argument becomes increasingly untenable. And as suggested from the outset, ‘globalisation’, in as much as it is a set of processes that might more accurately be denoted as being liberalisation, does not give rise to a universal experience, and in that it is asymmetrical in form, does not imply a universal logic.

This in fact represents a fundamental problem, as, by his own admission, globalisation *does* undermine sovereignty (traditionally understood). A Third Way analysis along these lines suggests that other states would be more or less effective in having a hand in shaping their future, depending upon their own particular circumstances. In fact, on this analysis, ‘globalisation’ for some states, suggests only capitulation and acceptance (responding to the inevitable), and not shaping the future, but rather having their future shaped by others. On this reading, the metaphor of ‘pooling’ sovereignty in order to ‘reclaim’ it instead returning us to a more ‘finite’ definition of sovereignty for those countries less able to exploit any such fortuitous conjunctions as those favouring the UK, in that strength and ability to control to determine their own futures eludes them.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Differences, centring on the progressive and conservative reactions to globalisation and change, each holding to their own view of sovereignty and autonomy, thus do not reflect differing positions in time (the latter depicted as anachronistic), but invalid categories. Based less on a set of logical presuppositions determined by situation, and more on an invalid diagnosis of a putatively neutral process and homogenous entity, the ‘progressive’ response to globalisation - advocating ‘pooling’ – now seems less obviously desirable than Third Way theory might have us expect. In fact, on this conceptualisation, the ‘conservative’ position appeals, because it at least gives the appearance of agency and the opportunity to affect one’s destiny where the conjunction of historical factors does not allow for the country to exploit for example any ‘pivotal’ role. Sovereignty, redefined, offers control in the face of globalisation through pooling to only a limited few.

However, as discussed in the previous chapter the Third Way analysis of globalisation and change is associated with forces that are essentially irresistible. Fatalism, it would seem, is not avoided at the international level for most countries in the face of ‘globalisation’ so understood, suggesting a possible tension:

We are now... in an era in which the authority of the state is being limited by developments on the domestic economy, on the international stage. Internationally, no country is an island from the powerful trends of the global economy. No state has its authority unimpeded by the development of international organisations in the wake of globalisation, such as WTO.<sup>76</sup>

Yet Blair and Cook remain upbeat about the implications of globalisation. As a partial analysis, agency is forgone at the domestic level, only to be retrieved at the international

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<sup>76</sup> Cook, ‘The Influence of Ideas of 1989 On Foreign Policy’, op.cit.

level. The formulation does not domestically guarantee a valid role for the nation-state as an important structural feature of the international system. The analysis in this respect is therefore only partial, and not universally applicable, failing to recognise the sense in which some states are more or less able to benefit from co-operation - assuming that co-operation concerns realising a *variety* of national interests. Centrally, the analysis glosses over the variance in 'power', judged here in terms of the constitutive and shaping role played in the production and reproduction of a particular set of processes and made possible in part thanks to a disproportionate role a country such as Britain has at the heart of institutions now portrayed as central.

This analysis, it may be said, purposely avoids recognition of how globalisation impacts states differently, favouring some disproportionately according to the differing circumstances of each locale. Rather, and underlying this view, there resides at a deeper level the assumption that the forces of globalisation are universally favourable. That is, this view is premised on a belief in an underlying and natural harmony of interests and a common destiny, which can be explained in terms of the teleological assumptions contained in the conceptualisation of globalisation.

## *2. Solidarism and the 'Natural' Harmony of Interests.*

Of course, the idea of a 'harmony of interests', and reflections on its role in international relations is not new. It in fact persists as a key theme in the discussions on the nature of state-to-state relations, underlying a more 'idealistic' as opposed to 'realist' view.

For Carr, the idea is based on the assumption “that the highest interest of the individual and the highest interest of the community naturally coincide. In pursuing his own interest, the individual pursues that of the community, and in promoting the interest of the community he promotes his own.”<sup>77</sup> So it is in the international domain, this time with the interests of the community referring to the international community, and the individual referring to the state. Carr was sceptical of any such state of affairs, including a harmony of interests in international economic relations, and concluded that “we must... reject as inadequate and misleading the attempt to base international morality on an alleged harmony of interests which identifies the interest of the whole community of nations with the interest of each individual member of it.”<sup>78</sup>

The doctrine of the harmony of interests... serves as an ingenious moral device invoked, in perfect sincerity, by privileged groups in order to justify and maintain their dominant position.<sup>79</sup>

Carr's chief point in critiquing the idea of a natural harmony of interests in The Twenty Years Crisis have been summed up by Wilson. According to Wilson:

The notion of a natural harmony of interests of all in *laissez faire*... was not, for Carr, a truth or axiom of universal validity, but the special ideology of the rising commercial class...Similarly, the supposed absolute and universal principles of the utopian - free trade, international law and order, the indivisibility of peace - were not principles at all, 'but the unconscious reflections of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time'.<sup>80</sup>

Whereas Carr was writing during the difficult period of the 1930's, the question is does such a cynical conclusion still hold today? As outlined, for New Labour times have

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<sup>77</sup> Edward Hallet Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction To The Study of International Relations, (MacMillan & Co. Ltd: London, 1962), p.42.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Wilson, 'E.H.Carr: The Revolutionist's Realist', [www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/global-library/](http://www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/global-library/). First published 2000. (The last sentence is borrowed from Carr himself).

changed and with them the nature of international politics. Globalisation, the new global economy and change have all contributed to undermining the validity of any narrow realist approach to foreign policy, but not to be replaced by idealism. Contained in this position rather, is a belief that the process of change dubbed globalisation favours all, as it allows for the nascent development of a global interest. Globalisation drives a process whereby states come to recognise a common destiny, and are unified by the common objective experience that it gives rise too. But more than this, it also holds out the possibility for the development of a universal set of values.

In this final section I want to do two things. First, and contrary to the above account, I will suggest that because their own diagnosis of globalisation is untenable, Carr's underlying scepticism is perhaps not misplaced even today, particularly when one considers the appropriate response to globalisation advocated by New Labour (liberalisation, openness and deregulation). Second, and in order to better make my point, I first make sense of the New Labour position by drawing parallels to the solidarist conceptualisation of international society, associated with the 'English School'. This is because in alluding to the need for agreement on universal values, and in taking a 'third way' position beyond realism and idealism, Cook and Blair espouse a view of international relations that shares in common many features associated with this view, particularly in their determination to re-examine the two key norms of sovereignty and non-intervention.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See Tim Dunne & Nicholas Wheeler, 'The Blair Doctrine: Advancing the Third Way in the World', in Little & Wickham-Jones, 'New Labour's Foreign Policy', op.cit., p.63.

A solidarist conception of international relations begins from the assumption that relations between states are such that they form an international society. Contrary to a realist outlook, anarchy does not preclude the possibility of certain values being shared between states. Indeed the existence of a limited set of values is what in fact defines an international society. Bull describes an international society in the following terms:

a society of states... exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions.<sup>82</sup>

Obvious parallels can be seen here between this view and the view of Blair and Cook. Where Bull refers to international society, Blair and Cook refer to 'community'. Both recognise the primacy of the state and the centrality of security, yet both eschew that any 'logic' derived from the anarchic nature of the system must determine that security is a zero sum game, or that 'global interests' might not also play a part in determining national policy.

However, Bull spells out two possible conceptualisations of international society - one pluralist and the other solidarist.<sup>83</sup> For Bull, the pluralist conception of international society is one where "states are capable of agreement only for certain minimum purposes, the most crucial being reciprocal recognition of sovereignty and the norm of

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<sup>82</sup> Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics, (London: MacMillan, 1977), p.13. See also Hedley Bull & Adam Watson, (eds.), The Expansion of International Society, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.1.

<sup>83</sup> Hedley Bull, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society', in Herbert Butterfield & Martin Wight, (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics (London : Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp35-50. See also Nicholas Wheeler, 'Pluralist and Solidarist Conceptions of International Society: Bull and Vincent on Humanitarian Intervention', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 1992, Vol 21, Number 3, pp463-488.

non-intervention".<sup>84</sup> Such a view holds that "states are able to agree on the need for order despite their competing views of justice".<sup>85</sup> Thus a pluralist conception interprets justice to be subjective and as a result potentially subversive of international order, where international order connotes that "pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states".<sup>86</sup> Amidst competing views on values, a pluralist conception settles for a status quo that privileges this order, and as a result the society of *states*, over justice. On this view, sovereignty and non-intervention are the implacable norms upon which co-existence are founded, and the continuation of the society of states thus guaranteed.

However, according to Blair, though international order in the past had been built on the foundation of "the principle of non-interference", this must now be "qualified in important respects":<sup>87</sup>

Acts of genocide can never be a purely internal matter. When oppression produces massive flows of refugees which unsettle neighbouring countries, then they can properly be described as 'threats to international peace and security'. When regimes are based on minority rule they lose legitimacy – look at South Africa.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, in addition to offering a reformulation of the meaning of the term sovereignty, Blair also formulates an agenda that is increasingly subversive of the principle of 'non-interference'. It is in these twin respects that it may be said that New Labour adumbrates a more 'solidarist' conception of international society.

<sup>84</sup> Tim Dunne & Nicholas Wheeler, 'Hedley Bull's Pluralism of the Intellect and Solidarism of the Will', *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No.1, 1996, p.94.

<sup>85</sup> Andrew Linklater, Beyond Realism and Marxism, (London: MacMillan, 1990), p.20.

<sup>86</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p.8. See also Hedley Bull, Justice in International Relations, Hagey Lectures, University of Waterloo, 1984, p.13.

<sup>87</sup> Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', op.cit.

A solidarist view of international society centres on the rights and duties of the individual. Questions of justice concern “what is due not only to states and nations, but to all individual persons in an imagined community of mankind”.<sup>89</sup> On this view, extending questions of justice function to sustain and develop international society beyond the minimal value of international order. Bull himself became increasingly persuaded that in order to perpetuate an international society of states (something he held as an obviously desirable thing), questions of justice must increasingly play a part. In other words, rather than being subversive of international society, current circumstances meant that questions relating to ‘third world’ equity (i.e. questions of justice) for example, must be taken into account. Failure to do so, may, in the long term, have the effect of undermining the possibility of international society.

Both Blair and Cook are in effect in agreement with this view, with Blair stressing the importance of qualifying the norm of non-interference, and Cook, of issues relating to human rights and also equity.<sup>90</sup> Blair points out that:

[w]e live in a world where isolationism has ceased to have a reason to exist. By necessity we have to co-operate with each other across nations. Many of our domestic problems are caused on the other side of the world. Financial instability in Asia destroys jobs in Chicago and in my own constituency in County Durham. Poverty in the Caribbean means more drugs on the streets in Washington and London. Conflict in the Balkans causes more refugees in Germany and here in the US. These problems can only be addressed by international co-operation. We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper. We cannot ignore new

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Bull, *Justice in International Relations*, op.cit., p.18.

<sup>90</sup> It should be pointed out however, that intervention is also considered as a central issue for Cook. For Cook, “[t]he biggest unresolved question in upholding universal values is when is it right for the international community to intervene and who decides that it is right?”. Cook, ‘Foreign policy and the National interest’, op.cit.

political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate. We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure. On the eve of a new Millennium we are now in a new world.<sup>91</sup>

In order to facilitate greater solidarity, Blair, in articulating a ‘new doctrine of the international community’ therefore qualifies the norm of non-interference, offering five considerations that must first be applied before it is permissible to break with this norm, and actually intervene: first, certainty – “are we sure of our case”; second; have all diplomatic options been exhausted; third, can the military option be undertaken in a ‘sensible and prudent’ way; fourth, is the international community ‘prepared for the long term’; and fifth, is the national interest involved.<sup>92</sup> Taken together, Blair argues that these tests provide validity and legitimacy to any future decision on “when and whether we will intervene”.<sup>93</sup> Underlying such a view is the assumption of an international community, suitably unified to the extent that agreement can now be expected in qualifying this norm.

Thus it can be seen that Blair and Cook reorient foreign policy along solidarist lines, presenting this response as credible in light of the ‘new times’ associated with globalisation, demanding as a result, the need for universal values (that is the increased need for questions of justice to be incorporated). The question is how credible is this position, given the understanding of globalisation that New Labour hold? Centrally, this view draws attention to the need for a universal set of values

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<sup>91</sup> Blair, ‘Doctrine of the International Community’, op.cit.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

A key problem or tension, as Bull recognised, concerning the international society approach, and particularly the solidarist formulation, concerns the role that a common culture plays in validating the idea of certain shared values and interests at the international level. As Wight argues, to come into existence, international society implies a prior shared culture of sorts. This he believed did not exist globally.<sup>94</sup> Bull agrees; “all historical international societies have had as one of their foundations a common culture”.<sup>95</sup> Thus a global international society, it would seem, presumes a global culture of sorts. Indeed, Cook himself points out that “even the strongest global institution will sound an uncertain note if it is not clear as to the values which it is meant to promote”.<sup>96</sup>

Hence “the need for universal values”<sup>97</sup> Both Blair and Cook see these values as ‘emanating’ from the ‘international community’, since it is the international community that adheres to them, acts in accordance with them and develops them as if they were responsibilities.<sup>98</sup> Such a view however is problematic in that talk of universally ‘shared values’ is to many invalid. According to Bozeman for example, when we talk of

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Wight argued that “we must assume that a states-system [i.e. an international society] will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members.” Martin Wight, *System of States*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p.33. As to whether international society - its genesis and further development - necessitates a shared culture, see Barry Buzan, ‘From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School’. *International Organisation*, Vol.7, Summer 1993, pp327-352. Buzan argues that a ‘logic of anarchy’ provides the necessary sense of ‘we-ness’, understanding society along ‘gesellschaft’ as opposed to ‘gemeinschaft’ lines. This therefore precludes the need for a common global culture.

<sup>95</sup> Hedley, *The Anarchical Society*, op.cit., p.304.

<sup>96</sup> Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and the National Interest’. op.cit.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> See Blair, ‘A New Era of International Partnership’, op.cit.

universal values, we are in fact usually referring to the values of the ‘west’.<sup>99</sup> Likewise, when we talk of globalisation, to many, we are referring to ‘Westernisation’.

Writing in the 1980s Bull himself argued that there may indeed be a common ‘world view’ developing, borne out of the experience of ‘modernity’.<sup>100</sup> Bull argued that although industrialisation, modernisation and state formation would not necessarily produce social and political homogenisation, “it would be facile to imagine that [they] can take place without affecting the cultures of the societies in which [they] operate”.<sup>101</sup>

Whereas Bull talks of the potentially unifying processes associated with ‘modernity’, Blair and Cook instead focus on the change brought about by globalisation, effectively justifying their solidarist position. The assumption is that the international community is increasingly unified in the face of change. As each state experiences globalisation in much the same way, each state as a result increasingly recognises the shared risks and opportunities associated with these new times. Response to this state of affairs is therefore relatively uniform; it does not pull states in different directions.

As discussed, human rights constitute just one area in which the values of the international community are increasingly one and the same. On this issue it was seen that globalisation and change functioned to depoliticise this issue. As Cook argued, in a knowledge based economy respect for human rights was becoming a *sin qua non* of

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<sup>99</sup> For example see Adda Bozeman, ‘The Future of International Society in a Multicultural World’, in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds.), *The Expansion of International Society*, op.cit., pp372-386. For an alternative position, one that posits the existence of a global international society, see Chris Brown, ‘Ethics of Coexistence: The International theory of Terry Nardin’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14, No.3, 1988, pp.213-222.

<sup>100</sup> Bull, *The Third World and International Society*, op.cit., p.30.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

economic growth. As isolation from the global marketplace is simply not a rational option, ultimately curtailing human rights is not an option either.

And yet, for the reasons outlined already, it is not possible to assume that 'globalisation' creates a shared 'world culture' that might allow for thinking about globalisation and its impact on the international system along 'solidarist' lines. It is hard to imagine that the necessary universal values will 'emanate' from the context generated by globalisation. As a constituted process, it necessarily manifests itself in line with certain powerful interests - explaining why it is so often considered as 'corporate' globalisation. Moreover, it impacts upon different states according to circumstances specific to them. Neither implying growth nor development, it is invalid to assume an underlying natural harmony of interests in this respect. Therefore, we ought not to assume that a more pluralist conception is in fact more appropriate for sustaining the international society in the long-term.

This returns us to a more sceptical position, one that is closer to that of Carr. When we return to some of the implication of 'globalisation' in this respect and reconsider the argument, we see that it does not allow all to control their destiny, though an argument is proffered as if this were not so. We see that the process is presented as neutral, even though it clearly is not so. We see that 'British' values, remain unaltered, but are now sold as if universally valid. And we see that the difficult circle is squared, on the matter of pursuing British economic interests, and giving the appearance of pursuing an ethically driven agenda. The common destiny is the British destiny, and as such we ought to be suspicious.

## Conclusion

From the analysis undertaken in this chapter, it can be seen that globalisation at least appears to have spurred a comprehensive rethink on foreign policy, holding out the possibility of a sort of ‘third way’ in international affairs. The centrality afforded to global matters - globalisation, global interests, global community, universal values - is striking, reflecting the degree to which New Labour, through Cook and Blair, have imbibed key elements of the globalisation discourse.<sup>102</sup> Thus ‘globalisation’ is of considerable significance. And in as much as this is the case, significant limitations to this approach can be identified.

A first point to make in this regard is the close relationship between the initial domestic exegesis, and the subsequent argument made when developed to encompass the international realm. Many of the assumptions animating the domestic exegesis play an important determining function in this area. In line with the domestic exegesis, globalisation is seen as something ‘out there’, natural and unavoidable, yet ultimately desirable and not a threat. As a process without a subject, it therefore takes on a neutral connotation, and in combination with the idea of liberalisation, an underlying ‘natural harmony of interests’ pervades the analysis, whereby British interests can be seen to equate with the interests of the international ‘community’ as a whole. This allows Blair

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<sup>102</sup> By way of contrast, the four strategic aims listed alongside the original mission statement lacked such an obvious and radical ‘global’ dimension. These strategic aims were; “to make the United Kingdom a leading player in a Europe of independent nation states; to strengthen the Commonwealth...; to use the status of the UK in the United Nations to secure more effective international action; to foster a people’s diplomacy through services to British citizens abroad and by increasing respect and goodwill for Britain among the peoples of the world...”. Cook, ‘British Foreign Policy’, op.cit.

and Cook to develop the significance of the ‘new times’ in a direction that posits a ‘third way’ in international affairs, one that inexorably moves us in a common direction.

Nevertheless, whereas at the domestic level the possibility of a Third Way only requires convincing a domestic constituency of the imperatives associated with a particular version of globalisation, such an aim becomes all the more ambitious when attempted at the international level. The problem for such a view therefore relates to the ability to forge an original position at the international level (that is proffer a particular foreign policy) in light of globalisation, which ultimately depends for its success on convincing other states of the correctness of this position. The understanding of globalisation when considering the domestic impact derives in large part from a process that exists as something ‘out there’, a ‘thing-in-itself’. Because the spectre of globalisation looms large, the possibility of convincing people of this position is more obtainable. And yet the variety in circumstances, perspectives and interests that characterise the broader international realm, calls into question the possibility of a global consensus forming in this regard. And this is crucial because the possibility of instantiating New Labour foreign policy along the desired declared lines, ultimately stands or falls on the ability to convince others of its essential correctness. And the logic of this position is to throw light back on the longer-term possibility of a domestic third way.

Combined, the above assumptions silence a more negative and less glib analysis. I have argued that in fact, the trends ascribed to globalisation do not necessarily give rise to co-operation, nor do they necessarily encourage the development of global interests and universal values. In terms of agency, only some states may be said to have any

determinative role, i.e. are able to shape ‘globalisation’ (judged in terms of New Labour’s own analysis). Thus ‘pooling’ sovereignty as a means of recovering control in the face of ‘globalisation’ (selectively understood), is not an option for most states. Consequently, questions arise as to why a country should then consider the ‘pooling’ of sovereignty as desirable. This becomes particularly prescient when considering the almost symbiotic relationship of globalisation to liberalisation.

Resisting any fatalistic argument instead holds out a different set of options for most states, options that do not point to a ‘third way’, as power cannot be recovered through multi-lateral cooperation, or through exploiting a ‘pivotal’ status. Much rests on the degree to which liberalisation is actually seen to favour all, both across and within states. In other words, should it become clear that the current processes of change do not favour all, then so the argument begins to unravel.

Secondly, the desire on the part of New Labour to place human rights at the heart of foreign policy, and to do so in a way that suggests that it is now less problematic is also flawed. ‘Rights’ cannot be grounded in terms of being the *sin qua non* of economic success.

Finally, as I will develop in the next chapter, a decidedly realist position can be interpreted in this analysis, in that rather than providing a viable solidarist policy, the position seems to favour, perhaps at the cost of others, an exclusive British set of national interests. Britain’s particular circumstances mean that it has strong vested interests in perpetuating ‘globalisation’ (*qua* continued liberalisation and free trade),

which in turn requires convincing others of the worth of globalisation (selectively understood, as a thing-in-itself, determining specific responses). Thus it is in the interests of the British government to articulate a particular account of globalisation that is palatable abroad (as well as domestically). Promulgating an approach that shares key features of the strong thesis in fact functions to realise this.

## Chapter 6

### Re-Interpreting the Significance of Globalisation to New Labour

*“Globalisation is with us. It is not just here to stay. It is here to accelerate”.*<sup>1</sup>

*“We have been elected as New Labour, and we will govern as New Labour”.*<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction

The manner in which globalisation and change are depicted in the New Labour discourse is unacceptable. The nature of the new programme and the type of redefinition explained in terms of globalisation is unsustainable. Third Way theory, at least as articulated by Blair, is as a result open to question.<sup>3</sup> In essence, there is in fact more room for manoeuvre than is recognised by New Labour. The question is, how to account for a view of globalisation, central as it is, that is nonetheless so flawed?

In order to explain this apparent anomaly, in this chapter I posit that one can reinterpret the ‘significance’ of globalisation. To make the argument the chapter will take on the following form. In the first section, I return to consider the method of depth hermeneutics discussed in chapter two, drawing attention to the concept of ideology and its application in considering ‘globalisation’ in this context. Following this I then revisit the arguments of the previous chapters with an eye to identifying the ideological strategies that they now might be said to display. However, and in order to

<sup>1</sup> Robin Cook, ‘The Challenges of Globalisation’, speech to the Trilateral Commission at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Blair, Victory Speech at the Royal Festival Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1997.

<sup>3</sup> This is reflected in the recent set of interventions on Third Way Theory, in which Anthony Giddens, following Wolfgang Merkel, argues for the need to distinguish four ‘third ways’. Anthony Giddens, Where Now For New Labour? (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p.4. See also Wolfgang Merkel, ‘The Third Ways of Social Democracy’, in Anthony Giddens, (ed.), The Global Third Way Debate,

validate these strategies as 'ideological', I first contextualise the New Labour position, drawing attention to certain social-historical circumstances, before finally offering a re-interpretation.

### Depth Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Ideology: Approaching the New Labour Discourse

Understood as a version of the depth-hermeneutical procedure, the interpretation of ideology draws upon the phases of social-historical analysis and formal or discursive analysis- but it also goes beyond these phases: it puts forward an interpretation, a creative and synthetic proposition, concerning the interrelations between meaning and power.<sup>4</sup>

It is not enough to simply question any understanding of globalisation empirically, that much has been said already. But what are the consequences of rejecting an approach that attempts to understand globalisation purely in terms of the facts, in favour of an alternative reading that highlights a non-positivist social constructivism?

In this section I return to an examination of the depth hermeneutic technique and what it entails in light of an assessment of the New Labour discourse.

A first point to make is that in adopting a depth hermeneutical approach, the analyst must examine how the meaning of globalisation is promulgated and received in the social realm; by whom, and in what circumstances. Sensitive to the possibility that the idea of globalisation will be appropriated and manipulated as a result of its amorphous nature, it becomes incumbent upon the analyst concerned with the significance of globalisation to New Labour, not just to consider the argumentative flaws of the original position judged empirically (part of the formal analysis of

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(Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp50-73; Stuart White, 'The Ambiguities of the Third Way', in Stuart White, (ed.), New Labour: The Progressive Future? (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp3-17.

chapters four and five), but also to critically examine the form that the argument takes, mindful of the broader social historical field in which the argument is played out. Once factored into the argument, this dimension allows for a critical (re)interpretation; something Thompson, in the above quote, refers to as a 'synthetic proposition'.

On the basis of the approach advocated thus far, it can be said that there exists no 'Archimidean' point by which one may conceptualise the New Labour position vis-à-vis others judged in terms of something called 'globalisation' and distinguished in terms of 'ideology'. By this I mean that there is no thing denoted as 'globalisation' that can be understood in separation from the social actors who constitute and reproduce it in a particular form as a result of their particular interpretations. The limitations inherent to an approach can be seen in the case of Clift.

In conducting a comparative analysis of the British Labour party judged against other Western European social democracies, Clift argues that "we may conceptualise the ideological tension between New Labour and European social democracy turning on the implications of globalization, first, for social democratic egalitarianism (and in turn redistribution), and secondly, for the role of the state in the economy".<sup>5</sup> Clift offers a convincing argument with respect to the idea that a variety of approaches can be distinguished between parties, stemming from the way in which the environment is construed. Nonetheless, to conceptualise the differences as 'ideological', and turning on the implications of globalisation, is in part misleading. The problem with this

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<sup>4</sup> John B. Thompson, Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication, (Oxford: Polity Press & Blackwell Publishers, 1990), p.320.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Clift, 'New Labour's Third Way and European Social Democracy', in Steve Ludlum & Martin J. Smith, (eds.), New Labour in Government, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2001), p.62.

statement is twofold, relating to both the essentialist reading of globalisation it implies (in effect reifying the notion ‘globalisation’), and to the ‘neutral’ understanding of ideology underpinning the approach. Each are in fact related.

In positing an essentialist reading of globalisation and adopting a neutral conception of ideology Clift continues:

The European social democratic parties are more similar now than at any time this century. However, the importance of the national context to each formation engenders enduring and significant differences between these ‘sister’ parties. Underlying these differences are a range of conceptions of the implications of globalization for social democratic commitments to egalitarianism and full employment.<sup>6</sup>

On the first part of this quote both Clift and I can agree. Such a position recognises, or at least does not preclude the importance of, the interpretative dimension - as each ‘sister’ party makes sense of and acts according to a set of partially unique national factors. However, the meaning of globalisation proffered by each party does not derive from a different reading of the same thing, i.e. ‘globalisation’. There does not occur a convenient distinction between the object (globalisation) and the subject (those interpreting and as a result constituting a phenomenon denoted as globalisation). Instead, one must consider the fact that interests peculiar to the agent colour the interpretation and potentially constitute a process bearing the hallmarks of this particular interpretation.

It is this factor that draws attention to the possibility of an ideological dimension being present in the analysis; but, as discussed in chapter two, by ‘ideological’, I have

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.71.

in mind a view quite different to that of Clift. As Thompson has noted about the concept of ideology:

Strategies of symbolic construction are the tools with which symbolic forms capable of creating and sustaining relations of domination can be produced; they are symbolic devices, as it were, which facilitate the mobilization of meaning. But whether the symbolic forms thereby produced serve to sustain relations of domination or to subvert them, to bolster up powerful individuals and groups or to undermine them, is a matter that can be resolved only by studying how these symbolic forms operate in particular social-historical circumstances, how they are used and understood by the subjects who produce and receive them in the socially structured contexts of everyday life.<sup>7</sup>

Hence the analysis of ideology “is concerned with the ways in which meaning is mobilized in the social world and serves thereby to bolster up individuals and groups who occupy positions of power”.<sup>8</sup> This refers to the possibility of judging the significance in a negative fashion, as “the interpretation of ideology involves not only the projection of possible meaning, but also the claim that such meaning serves, in certain circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of domination”.<sup>9</sup> It is this central fact about ideology, which in relation to an idea like globalisation requires an examination of its use in embedded circumstances. To merely label ‘globalisation’ in itself as ideological, or to point out that different approaches to it can be understood as connoting different ideologies, is therefore unsatisfactory. In effect, it silences an important avenue of critical enquiry.

In order to sustain an argument for an interpretation of ideology with regards to the significance of globalisation in the New Labour discourse, a prior set of assumptions must then ultimately be made, because “[w]e cannot read the ideological character of

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<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.67.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.294.

symbolic phenomena off symbolic phenomena themselves".<sup>10</sup> We must instead recognise that “[w]hether symbolic phenomena do or do not serve to establish and sustain relations of domination is a question which can be answered only by examining the interplay of meaning and power in particular circumstances”.<sup>11</sup>

A critique of ideology in the New Labour account of globalisation therefore requires an appreciation, not just of the particular understanding of ‘globalisation’ held by someone like Blair, but also the particulars of the conceptualisation, and the timing and situation in which this version of events is adumbrated. Each is an inseparable element, not only helping to explain the particular form that the argument takes, but also why it is that a particular set of processes are ultimately manifested as they are. So in the case of New Labour, what are these circumstances that allow for an ideological interpretation?

In this chapter I argue that the particular account of globalisation articulated by Blair through to 1999 (in other words that account which stressed the domestic implications of globalisation), in the main reflected the need to gain election and to sustain credibility once elected. In this respect, and in line with Grant, “Labour’s policy adjustments were not necessarily driven by globalization *per se*. In large part they were a response to domestic imperatives which meant that electoral success was perceived to be dependent on the party’s ability to differentiate itself from old Labour”.<sup>12</sup> But, in contrast to Grant, it is important to recognise the function of ‘globalisation’, seeing it, in line with my orientation, as in some way implicated in the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p56.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Wyn Grant, ‘Globalisation, Comparative Political Economy and the Economic Policies of the Blair Government’, CSGR Working Paper No. 08/98, University of Warwick.

process, not merely functioning as an excuse, but rather helping to produce the necessary empirical conditions in order to reinforce this position in the long run, that is to create the idea of a third way as a permanent possibility.

Thus a particular set of circumstances – interpreted as domestic imperatives – are presented as if compelling Blair to adopt an electoral strategy in a direction that without ‘globalisation’ would quite simply have been regarded as a move to the right.<sup>13</sup> A particular reading of globalisation can therefore be interpreted as functioning in a number of ways to give legitimacy to this change. Certain strategies of symbolic construction can be observed, for example *naturalisation* and *reification*, and interpreted as ideological because they enable Blair and New Labour to adumbrate a particular position conducive to gaining (and retaining) power which, if then enacted upon, will function to realise those very conditions.<sup>14</sup>

As a technique, this method can be extended to an analysis of the subsequent role globalisation plays in foreign policy formulation and their attempt to also shape this environment. Here I argue that both Cook and Blair are able to pursue an otherwise problematic set of (‘national’) interests, thanks to the ‘imperatives’ derived from a particular reading of globalisation. In this case strategies such as *passivisation* and *universalisation* can be read off of the discourse, functioning to obscure and make

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<sup>13</sup> I do not mean to suggest any essentialist reading of Social Democracy. As Tony Wright and Andrew Gamble point out, as a doctrine, social democracy is not fixed. Nonetheless, judgement can be made in light of what these changes would signify; without what I believe to be an erroneous understanding of ‘globalisation’. For a series of discussions on the nature of Social Democracy see Andrew Gamble & Tony Wright, (eds.), The New Social Democracy, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). For a useful set of discussions of what it is exactly that distinguishes social democracy from neo-liberalism see Eric Shaw, The Labour Party Since 1979: Crisis and Transformation, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.6; Raymond Plant, ‘Crosland, Equality and New Labour’, in Dick Leonard, (ed.), Crosland and New Labour, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1999), pp19-34; Colin Hay, The Political Economy of New Labour: Labouring Under False Pretences?, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp54-58.

palatable a broader policy of liberalisation. In other words, a policy of liberalisation can be promulgated as universally favourable, thanks to the adoption of certain strategies associated with a particular version of globalisation. Furthermore, these strategies can then be explained in terms of the conditions that they aspire to create; conditions that also function to underpin a possible ‘third way’ in international affairs.

Taken together, these contextual imperatives suggest a wilful attempt on the part of New Labour to permanently resolve a hitherto intractable set of difficulties by bridging a set of divides (in both the domestic and international area), by a discursive method that in time becomes real. And it is in this respect therefore that globalisation is central.

However, and before developing the analysis, a few things need to be said by way of qualification. First, I do not attempt to prove whether or not this shift is being intentionally ‘masked’. Ideological judgement does not rest upon the ability to show in some conspiratorial fashion that globalisation is adopted in order to dupe the wider public and party. A critique of ideology, in this sense, is not concerned with issues of ‘false consciousness’, or based on some simplistic ‘top down’ understanding of ideology, whereby a ‘ruling class’ determines ideas. Nor is it the aim here, to critique their account on the basis of some epistemologically flawed desire for recognition of the objective ‘truth’. The mode instead, concerns itself with how the meaning of globalisation can be seen to function to serve particular interests (meet certain ‘imperatives’).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I refer the reader to chapter two for a description of the general modes of operation of ideology, and the various strategies of symbolic construction associated with these modes.

<sup>15</sup> That said however, one would be naïve to hold to the possibility that this does not, in part, actually occur in the case of Blair. Referring to the apparently conservative nature of the Labour programme in

In addition to the kind of critique being offered, we need also to be clear about its ‘status’. The depth hermeneutic method, by its nature, eschews any definitive argument; it cannot provide the last say on the matter. Instead, all that can be offered is a more or less convincing argument that must nonetheless retain the status of an interpretation. As Thompson points out:

In analysing ideology, in seeking to grasp the complex interplay of meaning and power, we are not dealing with a subject matter that admits of incontestable demonstration (whatever that may be). We are in the realm of shifting sense and relative inequalities, of ambiguity and word-play, of different degrees of opportunity and accessibility, of deception and self-deception, of the concealment of social relations and of the concealment of the very process of concealment. To approach this realm in the expectation that one could provide incontestable analyses is like using a microscope to interpret a poem.<sup>16</sup>

In this vein such a method is decidedly unscientific. However, though any interpretation will remain contestable, it does not mean that it should in some way be afforded the status of being arbitrary. As Thompson points out “[t]here may be good reasons for offering a particular interpretation and adhering to it, reasons which may be quite convincing in the circumstances even if they are not altogether conclusive”.<sup>17</sup>

This shades into a second difficulty deriving from the sort of conceptualisation of ideology offered up by Thompson. For Thompson, ideology is ultimately concerned with how meaning and power intersects in such a way as to reinforce ‘relations of

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the immediate run up to the 1997 election, Blair is quoted as saying the following: “I am of the centre-left and I want the left to be part of this project. I want the left to realise that if we win this election, we will have done so without ceding any ground that cannot be recovered. I’m going to be a lot more radical in government than many people think.” This quote highlights two things. First, that Blair delineates between a programme that is publicly declared, and one that is kept secret. Secondly, that in attempting to gain election, ground had to be ‘ceded’; though this will then be ‘recovered’, with recovery undertaken somewhat ‘stealthily’. Interview given to the *Observer*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1997. Quoted in John Rentoul, *Tony Blair: Prime Minister*, (London: Warner Books, 2001), p.312.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.71.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

domination'. Obviously, such a statement in turn rests upon a broader commitment to realising a set of social relations presumably characterised as 'less dominant'. This is a more contentious and more difficult position to validate, potentially drawing one into a discussion about what might characterise a less dominant state of affairs.

Should you begin from the position that the current *status quo ante* is not inherently exploitative, then so it would follow that a narrative that further entrenches this state of affairs is itself fine. At the other end of the spectrum, one may hold to the view that societal relations are deeply skewed in favour of a small minority able to exploit power structures in order to reproduce certain relations of domination to their advantage. Here, a narrative whereby the status quo is naturalised would tend to be considered as pernicious, and in need of unmasking.

These are vexing issues, beyond the scope of this paper. The thrust of the critique contained in this chapter however derives from a limited set of assumptions, that I maintain, nonetheless qualifies the critique as ideological. As Žižek points out concerning ideology:

the starting point of the critique of ideology has to be full acknowledgement of the fact that it is easily possible to *lie in the guise of truth*. When, for example, some Western power intervenes in a Third World country on account of violations of human rights, it may be 'true' that in this country the most elementary human rights were not respected, and that the Western intervention will effectively improve the human rights record, yet such a legitimization none the less remains 'ideological' in so far as it fails to mention the true motives of the intervention (economic interests, etc.).<sup>18</sup>

Such an outlook (though with certain qualifications in mind) can be applied to thinking about New Labour and the function globalisation plays in the discourse. That

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<sup>18</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'The Spectre of Ideology', in Slavoj Žižek, Mapping Ideology (London: Verso, 1994), p.8. Emphasis in original.

which Blair adumbrates as if ‘true’, indeed obvious, is in fact often untenable. The so called unavoidable consequences of ‘globalisation’ are avoidable, ‘globalisation’ does not allow for a ‘non-ideological’ third way, the global economy need not be accepted ‘on its own terms’, and so on. Where this is the case, and given certain assumptions relating to the utility of such a position to New Labour, then so one can begin a critique of ideology. Thus if we take Žižek’s view of truth to refer to mean ‘Blair’s truth’, or ‘Cook’s truth’, then in this respect judgement is valid.

Moreover, that New Labour is relatively powerful vis-à-vis other individuals and institutions within the domestic realm is, I believe, indisputable. Such a position bestows upon the likes of Blair and Cook a degree of dominance within the country and further afield. This is to an extent simply assumed here. Hence negotiating the difficult idea of ‘relations of domination’ is, in the case of an analysis of the significance of globalisation and New Labour, perhaps reasonably clear-cut. What remains, as a contentious point open to dispute, is the *degree* of significance – particularly in assessing the significance of globalisation applied to the international realm – rather than whether or not it is at all significant.

With this in mind, I now turn to the specific task of re-interpreting the significance of globalisation. To do this I first offer a brief examination of what I label as ‘contextual postulates’ that explain the imperatives that give rise to the possibility of interpreting an ideological component. For clarity, I divide up the remainder of the chapter into two sub-sections; beginning with a re-examination of the domestic significance of globalisation, then followed by a reinterpretation of its significance for foreign policy formulation.

## Re-Interpreting the Domestic Significance of Globalisation: Getting Elected

The essence of Blair and New Labour is an attempt to resolve these problems: to end electoral decline; to reduce the potential for party conflict; and to provide an ideology which can retain some of Labour's historical commitments to social justice without alienating the middle income support necessary for electoral victory.<sup>19</sup>

In this section I examine in greater detail the above considerations which I argue accurately capture the New Labour strategy, and subsequently account for the apparent 'anomalies' relating to globalisation as understood in terms of its domestic significance. I build upon these insights, relating each in terms of a number of additional considerations. These considerations relate to the notion of globalisation predominating at the time, which derives from a broader *weltanschauung* associated with an ascendant neo-liberalism; as well as certain functions associated with the particular nature of the British economy and perceptions relating to the constraints that this imposes. These contentions provide for a particular (re)interpretation of the significance of globalisation to New Labour, helping to make sense, not only of the specific strategies that are observable in the context of the discourse over time, but also why a particular set of processes are, as a result, made manifest.

The first of the above factors draws attention to the outlook, or following Gill, the 'hegemonic view' prevailing at the time New Labour sought election.<sup>20</sup> Two considerations warrant mention in this regard, referring in the domestic context to the 'Thatcherite legacy', and more generally the impact of neo-liberalism.

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<sup>19</sup> Martin J. Smith, 'Tony Blair and the Transition to New Labour: 1994-2000', in Brian Brivati & Richard Heffernan, (eds.), The Labour Party: A Centenary History, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 2000), p.143.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Gill, 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation and Disciplinary Neo-Liberalism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No.3, 1995, pp399-423.

The latter, as I have argued in chapters three and four, has had a profound impact in shaping how ‘globalisation’ is generally conceptualised. In significant respects, the Blairite understanding shares in common important features found in the influential strong thesis formulation.<sup>21</sup> This I have discussed in the previous chapters, and so I will not elaborate on here.

The legacy of the ideas and policy changes associated with Margaret Thatcher are also an important consideration because they function to subsequently constrain what New Labour believed they could achieve, given the need to be electorally viable. In addition to entrenching the above orthodoxy, the legacy of eighteen years of conservatism significantly altered electoral perceptions as to the role of government, particularly the perceptions of that segment of the electorate dubbed ‘middle England’. In response, influential advisors such as Philip Gould pointed out that the electorate had markedly altered.<sup>22</sup> Following a longer-term general trend, conservative rule was understood to have precipitated a more individual, non-class based electorate, whose allegiance could no longer be assumed or predicted on the basis of social background.<sup>23</sup> In particular, key marginal voters were now perceived to be more averse to the idea of income tax increases and a tax regime generally

<sup>21</sup> This conflates globalisation with liberalisation, and assumes a global logic of deregulation, openness and flexibility. Globalisation is seen as a ‘thing-in-itself’, and so agency remains obscure. The process is nonetheless assumed to be progressive and in the interests of all. Thus politics plays a marginal ‘managerial’, ‘pragmatic’ or ‘facilitative’ role in the face of the largely irresistible forces of the global economy.

<sup>22</sup> Dennis Kavanagh, The Reordering of British Politics: Politics After Thatcher, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.217.

<sup>23</sup> Gould points out that in the forty-year period following the war: “Labour’s average vote fell from 44.5 per cent to 31.8 per cent”. Phillip Gould, The Unfinished Revolution: How the Modernisers Saved the Labour Party, (London: Little, Brown, 1998), p.21. See also Peter Mandelson & Roger Liddle, The Blair Revolution: Can Blair Deliver? (London: Faber & Faber, 1996).

be more averse to the idea of income tax increases and a tax regime generally geared towards redistribution.<sup>24</sup>

In light of this, and given the near obsessive concern on the part of Blair and his inner circle that they succeed in getting elected, it was held as crucial that the party capture the centre ground.<sup>25</sup> Speaking to the *Observer* newspaper in 1996, Blair argued that:

Politics will alter dramatically in the next few years. But I cannot foresee exactly what shape it will take. There is no doubt that if we continue to occupy the centre ground, if we become the One nation political party, if we can attract support from the centre as well as the centre-left, then we will be able to benefit significantly.<sup>26</sup>

As Smith points out, the need to pursue a radically new agenda was brought home, first by the disastrous electoral failure in 1983, and latterly by the failure of Neil Kinnock in 1992. In the case of the former, the size of the defeat “highlighted the scale of the electorate’s disillusionment with the party”, undermining the legitimacy of the more radical left faction that had secured a temporary victory over the (Labour) right, but at the cost of a set of manifesto policies subsequently dubbed the longest suicide note in history.<sup>27</sup> The lesson drawn from the defeat of Kinnock also seemed clear. The party was still not ‘radical’ enough.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution*, op.cit., p.21.

<sup>25</sup> According to Skidelsky, we may in fact say that “New Labour is a vehicle [designed] to capture and maintain power”. Robert Skidelsky, ‘Five Years Labour’. *Prospect*, May 2002.

<sup>26</sup> The *Observer*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1996. (Interviewed by Anthony Bevins) and quoted in Rentoul, *Tony Blair*, op.cit., p.290. According to Wickham-Jones, “Blair’s intention, arguably at any rate, was to place the party to the right of the median voter so as to ensure electoral victory by depriving the Conservatives of their core support”. Mark Wickham-Jones, ‘Introduction’ in Richard Little & Mark Wickham-Jones, New Labour’s Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade? (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2000), p.6.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Tony Blair and the Transition to New Labour*, op.cit., p.144.

<sup>28</sup> According to Sassoon, “Blair’s political courage has been mainly directed towards the transformation of the Labour Party into a powerful electable force, purging it from the remnants of a puerile radicalism. Much of this has required the deliberate occupation of a political space previously occupied by Conservatives.” Donald Sassoon, ‘European Social Democracy and New Labour’, in Gamble & Wright, *The New Social Democracy*, op.cit, p.33.

In light of this legacy, New Labour believed that further changes were needed to capture the ‘middle ground’, changes which by the time Blair sought victory translated to mean meeting the *preferences* of ‘middle England’.<sup>29</sup> This more fundamental shift of preference accommodation nonetheless presented a difficulty to Blair, given the nature of the constraints that he faced; namely the need to cobble together “a strategy for permanently linking the working class, the lower middle class and a significant element of middle class support”.<sup>30</sup>

While appealing to the preferences of ‘middle England’, New Labour still needed to appear to remain ‘true’ to their values and ‘traditional’ constituencies, which was problematic in that New Labour held to the view that the appropriate strategy to capture and retain the middle ground from the conservatives was essentially to appear more ‘competent’ in the field of *economic* management. Thus the desire to appear as a responsible, moderate and competent alternative, now translated to mean taking a ‘hands off’ attitude in the economic field.<sup>31</sup> This draws attention to the significance of pursuing the ‘centre’.

Though a concern to capture the centre ground has in fact been a perennial one for Labour, following eighteen years of conservative rule, in economic terms, the ‘centre ground’ was now a decidedly neo-liberal place. Whereas prior to the mid-1970s, both Labour and Conservatives alike adhered to a ‘post war consensus’ of sorts, in which full employment was considered a worthwhile and achievable policy goal, best

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<sup>29</sup> See Colin Hay, ‘Anticipating Accommodation, Accommodating Anticipations: the Appeasement of Capital in the ‘Modernisation’ of the British Labour Party, 1987-1992’, *Politics and Society*, Vol.25, No.2, 1997, p.25.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Tony Blair and the Transition to New Labour*, op.cit., p.145.

arrived at via certain Keynesian economic policies, by the 1990s this orthodoxy had been all but supplanted.<sup>32</sup> In its place, as Hay argues, this perceived need to 'accommodate' preferences, meant that New Labour ended up pursuing an agenda profoundly tied up with the immediate conservative legacy, a 'politics of catch-up', that may fairly be judged in important respects to be neo-liberal.<sup>33</sup> Hence the difficulty: how to advocate such a policy and still be able to 'reduce the potential for party conflict' and provide an ideology retaining 'Labour's historical commitments to social justice'?<sup>34</sup>

Compounding this difficulty, in approaching economic policy Blair and New Labour had to contend with an alternative and moderate position on the left that concentrated attention on certain 'pathologies' particular to the British economy.<sup>35</sup> As Burnham

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<sup>31</sup> See Pippa Norris, 'Anatomy of a Labour Landslide', in Pippa Norris & Neil Gavin (eds.), Britain Votes 1997, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Martin Harrop, 'The Pendulum Swings: The British General Election of 1997', Government and Opposition, 32, 1997, pp305-19.

<sup>32</sup> Driver & Martell, New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism, op.cit., p.182. See also Lawrence Black, Consensus or Coercion?: the State, the People and Social Cohesion in Post War Britain, (Cheltenham: New Clarion, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> It is not my intention to enter into the debate concerning how 'Thatcherite' Blair and New Labour are. For a critical view, one that sees the policies of New Labour and the Conservatives as essentially the same, see Colin Hay, 'Labour's Thatcherite Revisionism: Playing the "Politics of Catch-Up"', in Political Studies, Vol.42, No. 4, 1994, pp700-707. For a more sympathetic reading, stressing significant distinctions, see Martin J. Smith, 'Understanding the "Politics of Catch-Up": The Modernization of the Labour Party', Political Studies, Vol.42, No.4, 1994, pp708-715; Gerald Taylor, Labour's Renewal?: The Policy Review and Beyond, (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997). For a view that stresses the 'post-Thatcherite' nature of the settlement, i.e. suggesting a transcendence of both left and right in certain key respects, see Stephen Driver & Luke Martell, New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp158-173.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of certain parallels with Wilson's 'big idea' - a New Britain forged in the 'white heat of technological revolution' - see Hay, The Political Economy of New Labour, op.cit., p.6. For a critical examination of the gulf between Wilson's rhetoric and the reality of compromise see David Howell, British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), chapter nine. For an account that draws attention to a more perennial theme of Labour 'compromise' when in power see David Coates, The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp42-74.

<sup>35</sup> According to Wickham-Jones, the immediate period prior to Blair was motivated by the desire to "develop in the United Kingdom the kind of organized capitalism they perceived West Germany to enjoy". This is reflected in the manifesto and other documents over this period. Such policies as strengthening the Department of Trade and Industry, the creation of a state investment bank, industrial training schemes, and active intervention to curtail corporate takeovers. See Mark Wickham-Jones, 'Anticipating Social Democracy, Preempting Anticipations: Economic Policy-Making in the British Labour Party, 1987-1992', Politics and Society, Vol.23, No.4, 1995, p.468.

points out, “[a] quick survey of the history of ‘governing Britain’ in the twentieth century is apt to reveal that, despite much rhetoric, governments [have been] unable to solve the fundamental problems that beset the British economy (the relative productivity problem, the decline of the staple industries, recurrent inflationary pressure, the ‘boom and bust’ cycle”).<sup>36</sup>

Hutton points out that, in contrast to certain continental economies, the British economy suffers from the fact that it is “organised around a stock-market-based financial system and clearing banks averse to risk”.<sup>37</sup> This, it is held, explains why corporate strategy is on the whole more inclined towards the pursuit of short-term profit, with business strategies geared to boosting short-term share prices. What is more:

The UK’s flows of inward and outward investment are the highest in relation to national output for any industrial country. Britain invests more overseas than others, but also receives more inward investment. Therefore its own business community continually emphasises the virtues of free trade and minimal regulation.<sup>38</sup>

Hutton argues that this explains why the interests of the City and more broadly the international financial community have exercised a particularly influential role. Ultimately, Hutton points out that the effect of this is to “sanctify the New Right’s calls for budgetary austerity, free trade, and price stability.”<sup>39</sup> And this is unfortunate according to Hutton, in that it is this new right economic agenda that perpetuates the continued pathologies of boom and bust, under-investment, and decline of the ‘staple’ industries.

<sup>36</sup> Burnham, Peter. ‘New Labour and the Politics of De-politicisation’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.3, No.2, June 2001, p.127.

<sup>37</sup> Hutton, Will. The State We’re In, (London: Jonathon Cape, 1996), p.21. See also, Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour*, op.cit., p.27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

What is more, this is also problematic for reason that many on the Left see a policy that favours budgetary austerity and free trade as disproportionately favouring certain sectors (and regions) at the cost of others.<sup>40</sup> As an example of this conflict of interests, Hutton points to manufacturing industry. In pursuing interest rates designed to deliver a low inflation rate (and thus less concerned with the exchange rate), Labour meets the concerns of the financial community (the ‘City’). This nonetheless comes at a price, handicapping manufacturing industry through an overvalued pound, resulting in uncompetitive exports.<sup>41</sup> For Blair and New Labour then, the problem therefore concerns how to balance what is believed on the left to be a clear conflict of interests; arbitrating between a powerful electoral force on the economic right, at the same time as placating certain ‘losers’ traditionally constituting much of the traditional Labour vote.

Indeed, the above analysis points to difficulties that are perhaps perennial – given that the party is at least nominally claiming to remain of the left (if not ‘old left’) operating in the context of the UK (thus needing to capture and hold onto the ‘middle ground’). So, and with these difficulties in mind, I now turn to re-interpret the significance of New Labour’s understanding of globalisation. It will be seen that ‘globalisation’ does not simply act as a smokescreen, but rather functions to

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<sup>39</sup> Hutton, *The State We’re In*, op.cit., p.23.

<sup>40</sup> This is summed up in what is referred to as the modified structural dependence argument. Essentially, this refers to the idea that “since the state is structurally dependent upon capital, it must internalise the preferences of the latter and hence engage in preference-accommodation or capital appeasement”. Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour*, op.cit., p173.

<sup>41</sup> According to Coates and Hay, “throughout the post-war period manufacturing activity within the UK has been characterized by relatively low rates of productive investment, reflective of the high cost of capital and the endemic short-termism, risk aversion and overseas orientation of UK-based financial institutions”. David Coates & Colin Hay, ‘The Internal and External Face of New Labour’s Political Economy’, *Government and Opposition*, Vol.36, No.4, 2001, p.461. See also Simon Bond & Tim

potentially create in the long-term the very conditions needed to surmount these apparently intractable difficulties. And it is this respect, getting at a deeper significance to globalisation, that I now turn to re-examine the elements of the conceptualisation that operate to create these circumstances.

*Identifying the Modus Operandi in the New Labour Discourse in light of the Domestic Imperatives: Reification and Legitimisation.*

Reification refers to when “relations of domination may be established and sustained by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time. Processes are portrayed as things or as events of a quasi-natural kind, in such a way that their social and historical character is eclipsed”.<sup>42</sup> Associated with this are a set of strategies that include ‘naturalization’, ‘eternalization’ and ‘nominalization’/ ‘passivization’. Naturalization assumes that such events are in some way natural, that such outcomes are inevitable and ineluctable as a result of their ‘natural characteristics’. Eternalization, denies the social-historical character through the portrayal of events as “permanent, unchanging and everrecurring”.<sup>43</sup> Nominalization refers to when identifiable agency is ‘erased’ and replaced with the use of a noun, with passivization similarly referring to the rendering of verbs into the passive form, with the effect that:

Nominalization and passivization focus the attention of the hearer or reader on certain themes at the expense of others. They delete actors and agency and they tend to represent processes as things or events which take place in the absence of a subject who produces them.<sup>44</sup>

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Jenkinson, ‘The Assessment: Investment Performance and Policy’, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Vol.12, No.2, 1996, pp1-29.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.65.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.66

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

By this stage, it should be clear that it is possible to readily identify the above strategies existing in relation to ‘globalisation’. There are many instances in which the depiction of globalisation in the discourse can be critiqued in terms of its reifying properties. Clare Short for instance, writes: “globalisation is a historical fact. People have accused me of being in favour of globalisation. This is equivalent to accusing me of being in favour of the sun rising in the morning”.<sup>45</sup> According to Cook, it is not a matter of whether one is or is not in favour of globalisation. Rather the appropriate metaphor likens globalisation to the dawn, “[o]n balance, I think it is a good thing that the sun rises every day. But I also know there is nothing I can do to stop it even if I wanted to”.<sup>46</sup>

In this case Cook portrays globalisation as something ‘natural’, and thereby inevitable. What is more, the metaphor of the sun rising associates globalisation with something that is positive and good, i.e. there occurs a strategy of *displacement*, in which globalisation assumes certain positive connotations; ‘a new dawn’.<sup>47</sup> This is by no means an isolated position. It can be witnessed in many of the statements on globalisation issued by the government. For example, Blair conflating globalisation with ‘change’, an even more obscure idea in the discourse, then refers to the ‘forces of change’. Its association in the way in which it unfolds with the ‘accretion of time’, further reinforces the futility of resistance, now looking more like resistance to the

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<sup>45</sup> Clare Short, ‘Shaping Globalisation to Benefit All – Better Health for the Poor and Global Public Goods’, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2001, Geneva.

<sup>46</sup> Robin Cook, ‘Foreign Policy and National Interest’, speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Displacement, in this context, connotes how positive features associated with an object or agent is displaced onto another. Interestingly, Blair’s opening comment at the Royal Festival Hall on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 was “a new dawn has come has it not”.

laws of physics. To resist is “pointless and futile, like trying to keep the clock from turning.”<sup>48</sup>

In each of the above cases, the depiction has the effect of *reifying* globalisation, representing the process as a ‘thing-in-itself’. However, the point about reification in the context of the particular concept of ideology used here, is that it is significant because this in turn reinforces certain relations of domination (hence the need for a set of contextual considerations), by which I take to mean that it gives rise to the possibility of ensuring in the longer term a middle ground conducive to Labour’s long-term electoral success.

Reifying globalisation resolves many of the difficult issues raised in the previous section. It ‘smoothes the way’, not only in order to capture the middle ground whilst appearing credible in the eyes of the left, but also, as a result, functioning to potentially constitute in the long-run the necessary ‘real world’ conditions to maintain this hold. Take the following:

No country is immune from the massive change that globalisation brings.<sup>49</sup>

The key issue facing all governments of developed nations is how to respond.<sup>50</sup>

Each of these quotes, understood in conjunction with a reified version of globalisation, highlights its ideological connotation. To begin to develop how this is so it is important to map out a secondary set of assumptions within the argument, as discussed in chapter four. Firstly, we need to be mindful of the fact that globalisation

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<sup>48</sup> Tony Blair, speech given at the Conference of British Industry Annual Dinner, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Facing the Modern Challenge: The Third Way in Britain and South Africa’, Cape Town, South Africa, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Tony Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, speech to the Keidanren, Tokyo, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1996.

is closely synonymous with liberalisation. Thus in saying that '[n]o country is immune from the massive change that globalisation brings', a reified understanding of globalisation implies that no country is immune from liberalisation.

Secondly, Blair rates 'globalisation' as being of overriding significance in that '[t]he key issue facing *all governments* of developed nations is how to *respond*'. This means all governments of developed nations, regardless of differences, are locked into this fate: having to respond to liberalisation as a process, which is "irreversible and irresistible".<sup>51</sup>

Thirdly, the consequences of reification become all the more stark in that the antithesis of globalisation is protectionism. Denoting a strategy of *fragmentation*, the logic of the argument is as follows: given that we live in an age of globalisation, "[i]f this is so, then to compete in the global market two things must be done. A country has to dismantle barriers to competition and accept the disciplines of the international economy".<sup>52</sup> The manner of this response then, is essentially one of acquiescence, and reinforces a hands-off position, thus moving away from a more interventionist (industrial) strategy – the sort associated, as discussed, with both Neil Kinnock and John Smith (and latterly embodied in the idea of a 'stakeholding' economy).

It will be remembered that as a *modus operandi* of ideology, *legitimization* refers to the ways in which "relations of domination" are portrayed as "just and worthy of support", with *rationalization* referring to how "the producer of a symbolic form constructs a chain of reasoning which seeks to defend or justify a set of social

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<sup>51</sup> Tony Blair, untitled speech at the fiftieth anniversary of the World Trade Organisation (Ministerial meeting), Geneva, 1998.

relations or institutions, and thereby to persuade an audience that it is worthy of support.”<sup>53</sup> From the above, it may be said that a chain of reasoning is adumbrated such that acquiescence - here understood as uncritical acceptance of the disciplines of the international economy - is legitimised. According to Blair two things *must* be done. Reason determines that barriers to competition be dismantled, and the disciplines of the international economy accepted. This version of events thereby plays down (indeed silences), scope for action, and national difference.<sup>54</sup>

The effect of this position is to depoliticise those policies that, as discussed, have hitherto appeared controversial and more concerned with accommodating the narrower preferences of ‘the city’, or ‘middle England’. But rather than appearing to meet these particular interests, the significance of the above line of reasoning is that it gives the appearance of meeting all interests – because they are no longer at odds. Conflicting interests are at once silenced, reconciled and eclipsed. Consequently, when globalisation *qua* liberalisation is unavoidable, the effect is to neutralise an opposing set of positions, those of middle England and the financial market on the one hand (more attuned to neo-liberal solutions), and on the other hand those on the left within the party representing the interests of various unions, manufacturing and working class interests that do not hold to a more hands off policy. Hence legitimacy is arrived at for a policy that does not favour the interests of the left, through an account of globalisation that manages to balance (by erasing and reconciling) the conflicting interests discussed above.

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<sup>52</sup> Blair, ‘The Global Economy’, op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit , p.61.

<sup>54</sup> Both of which, as argued in chapters three and four, remain as valid options.

And this stance is reinforced by an account of globalisation that obscures and erases agency, highlighting, as a result, a strategy of *passivisation*. An agenda that prioritises response, benefits from a view of globalisation that takes the form of a ‘process-without-a-subject’. As a ‘thing-in-itself’, the question does not arise as to what drives the process itself. This remains essentially obscure, and so fits in nicely with the electoral concerns addressed above.

It will be remembered that the aim is to resolve the following problems: first, placate the party (by sustaining a credible left of centre ‘ideology’) and yet appeal to a broad constituency of interests that encompasses working and middle class elements; second, do this whilst remaining credible in the eyes of ‘the city’ and ‘finance capital’ (with their preference for budgetary austerity and free trade); third, appear to be economically ‘competent’ (keep taxes down); and fourth, ultimately, sustain this position, i.e. develop a strategy that permanently captures the middle ground.

As a ‘process-without-a-subject’, a reified globalisation erases agency, with the result that multi-nationals for example, remain, in the words of Fairclough, like ‘ghosts in the machine’.<sup>55</sup> In their place, ‘technology’, ‘capital’, and ‘globalisation’ are represented as the agents driving forward changes and thus become the key agents in this movement (hence denoting a strategy of *nominalization* and *passivisation*). In the Blair discourse, globalisation already exists - ‘it’, therefore can be thought of as the causal starting point. One need not say that New Labour accepts the essential tenets of the conservative (meaning neo-liberal) position.

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<sup>55</sup> Norman Fairclough, New Labour New Language? (London: Routledge, 2000), p.23.

Typical in this regard is the following statement; “[p]eople underestimate the impact of globalisation. Technology is rewriting the rules of business and the rules of trade...”<sup>56</sup> Of course, ‘technology’ is not rewriting the rules of business and trade. Concerning trade, the rules governing trade are negotiated, drafted and codified by specific agents ultimately acting on the behalf of the state. Indeed, and as will be explored in the next chapter, this position has since Seattle become increasingly clear, with considerable attention being drawn to the activities of hitherto little known institutions like the World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund.<sup>57</sup>

Related to this, is the significance posited to the fact that, “[t]echnology and capital are mobile.”<sup>58</sup> Of course, in a simple sense, this at best may be said to be partially true. But, and as has been discussed, that technology and capital are ‘mobile’ is at best a problematic assertion, from which little can be gleaned in terms of significance in itself, both in terms of ‘scope for action’, and national difference, i.e. the ‘facts’ do not ‘speak for themselves’. ‘Capital’, can be distinguished between short-term and long-term, or between productive and speculative flows. However, in making such a distinction, a significant move is made in recognition of the possibility of curtailing the distorting and negative impact of speculative short-term flows.<sup>59</sup> Such recognition, as suggested here, is impermissible given that the city of London itself contains a large chunk of the very institutions that do so well from the speculative short-term movements of ‘capital’.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Tony Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role for Britain in the World’, speech to Guildhall, London, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1999.

<sup>57</sup> These issues will be directly addressed in the next chapter,

<sup>58</sup> Blair, ‘Shaping a Pivotal Role for Britain in the World’, op.cit.

<sup>59</sup> On this see George Soros, Towards an Open Society: The Crisis of Global Capitalism Reconsidered, (New York: Public Affairs, 1998).

Thus a nominalised discourse in this respect plays an important part in obfuscating the issue, which in turn draws attention away from the neo-liberal nature of the project promoted in the name of globalisation. The particular understanding of globalisation, and the associated strategies, can thus be interpreted in an ideological fashion in that avoiding a more critical stance allows the processes to become more deeply embedded.

### *Universalisation and Unification*

Another important feature of Blair's domestic position on globalisation relates to the idea that all are united in the face of the challenge that it represents. This is a central feature of the New Labour claim to represent the needs of *all* people, and its significance derives from the idea of a 'one nation' centrist politics.

Globalisation gives the impression of unity, not only in moving beyond the structural critique of market societies that create winners and losers, but also in terms of having to remain 'ahead of the race'. As discussed in chapter four, the domestic implications imputed to globalisation provides no analysis to suggest that globalisation entails losers as well as winners. This constitutes a key assumption relating to globalisation, in that all are potential winners. To reinforce this position however, New Labour also postulate that essentially we all share the experience, i.e. we are all collectively affected; all 'coping with the same issues'.

*Unification* in the context implied here, refers to how a sense of unity, regardless of actual division or difference is established and sustained at the symbolic level. There

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<sup>60</sup> Many have discussed the viability of a 'Tobin tax' in this regard, though Straw has himself written off the viability of such an idea.

are of course not only domestic but also international elements to this. Within the domestic context however, the most significant instance of unification relates to the manner in which New Labour supplant ideology with national interest in order to posit an argument that replaces the possibility of systemic disunity, with a discourse of inclusion at the national level in the face of global forces. This allows for the idea that 'we' must all play our part in order to stay ahead of the race, to remain 'competitive' is both an individual and national obligation, with competitiveness meaning 'adaptable' to change, 'on its own terms'.

Thus, a particular set of assumptions surrounding the idea of globalisation clears the ground for a view of a united people all implicated in a metaphoric 'race'. This metaphor allows for a narrative that stresses 'team spirit' and community, with the result that differences appear to be reconciled. The possibility of systemic disunity does not now exist, as Blair, in his reading of globalisation, avoids the need for any deeper critique of capitalism or the market. Instead, the force of the argument rests, not upon the analysis, but on the common sense assumption of what the alternative would be. The spectre of foreign competition now unifies the country in the face of the challenge. The interests of British business and the British people are one in the same.

This is combined with a strategy of *universalization*. Universalization, here listed as a strategy of symbolic construction associated with legitimisation, refers to how "institutional arrangements which serve the interests of some individuals are represented as serving the interests of all".<sup>61</sup> In this context it can be seen that

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<sup>61</sup> Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, op.cit., p.61.

globalisation plays an important role in universalising a set of arrangements that favour the City (budgetary austerity, free trade, price stability). Universalisation of these norms, allows New Labour to avoid any over identification with any particular (class, gender, regional) group.

In the New Labour analysis, *universalisation* operates via globalisation by creating the illusion that in certain fundamental respects, different groups experience change in the same way, be they governments, classes, cultures, nations, individuals or genders. This follows from the reified understanding of globalisation as a ‘thing-in-itself’, which avoids the possibility that workers who are unskilled or only semi-skilled, working perhaps under ‘flexible’, part-time or temporary contracts, may have to disproportionately pay the price of being ‘adaptable’, now meaning flexible. Just as some are more equal than others, so some may have to be more adaptable too.

In adopting a particular version of globalisation, the broader New Labour discourse is able to gloss over many tricky issues that might otherwise obstruct the party in its aspiration to remain in power more permanently. Blair avoids dealing with, or even having to recognise these issues, with the effect that he can appear to be all things to all people. Thus at the deepest level, ‘globalisation’ plays its part in obscuring the idea that politics begins from the basis of conflicting interests; that conflicts of interest are somehow inherent to a world of scarce resources and conflicting values.

Secondly, this operates in the following terms: thanks to the imperatives of a *reified* ‘globalisation’, credibility determines the need for budgetary constraint, free trade and price stability. Thus depoliticised, and denoting a strategy of *legitimisation*, Blair

is instead able to represent these policies as unavoidable, and as such supplant the idea that they constitute difficult options with the idea that they are rational, obvious options – now in the national interest. In this position we can in turn interpret a strategy of *naturalisation*, *rationalisation*, *fragmentation* and importantly *unification*.

Thus when arguing that we are all having to confront globalisation, Blair uses a strategy of *universalisation*. This approach - given meaning in light of an erroneous set of perceptions concerning the nature of the global economy and how it operates - is nonetheless reinforced by a strategy of *passivisation*. That is, where New Labour discusses increased mobility of capital flows with ever significant ‘exit’ options (ignoring who holds these funds, and avoiding a recognition of the heavy reliance on ‘finance capital’ for investment projects or the role of multi-national companies), the discourse utilises a strategy of *passivisation* – conceptually embodied in the idea of globalisation as a ‘process-without-a-subject’.

This is further reinforced by the ‘paratactic’ approach that is used in order to substantiate the significance of globalisation (listing ‘facts’ as if equivalent without having to link them in a deeper context of cause and effect), which can be interpreted as another instance of *reification*. The fact that ‘globalisation’ explains this position, effectively forecloses ‘debate’ on the matter, and as such, is then able to draw strength from the ‘common sense’ assumptions prevalent and attached to the term at the time of espousing such views. This can now be interpreted as an instance of *legitimisation*, because it functions to silence the alternative possibility of a more orthodox leftist policy.

*Rationalisation* also occurs in this respect, in that it is held that there is now no alternative to the forces associated with globalisation because they are ultimately inevitable. The conservative alternative becomes, by definition, ‘irrational’; ‘conservatism’ and ‘protectionism’ become one and the same, ‘modernisation’ and ‘progress’ forming the other end of the antithesis. This can also be interpreted as an instance of *fragmentation*, specifically *expurgation*.

Finally, each of these strategies, in as much as they constitute *modus operandi* of ideology, and as strategies of symbolic construction, thereby potentially play their part in producing a reality in this image. As a result, we can interpret the domestic significance of ‘globalisation’ as operating not merely as a smoke screen, but in fact as a means of entrenching New Labour in power in the long-term. Nonetheless, the above is only half the picture. As discussed in chapter six, the domestic argument by its nature leads to foreign policy becoming a central site, whereby key issues, unresolved at the domestic level, are dealt with collectively. That is, to be successful, that is to allow for a domestic third way as a long-term possibility, necessitates that ideological strategies also operate ‘effectively’ at the international level. It is to this that I now turn.

#### Re-Interpreting the Significance of Globalisation in light of the National Interest

In their assessment of New Labour’s attempt to articulate a ‘Third Way’ in foreign policy, Dunne and Wheeler favourably conclude that perhaps the most significant aspect relates to the changing way in which ministers now employ language. In this respect there has occurred a ‘marked shift’, one that in time will function to

reconstitute that which is permissible from that which is not. According to Dunne and Wheeler:

The constitutive role that language plays in international relations can be seen from the fact that other governments take seriously what is said to them and about them... in every epoch... [language] is central in shaping a range of permissible actions.<sup>62</sup>

Though this is an important point to make, there is also a negative side to this analysis that goes largely unrecognised. This follows from the fact that language does not simply reflect a reality pre-ordained, as a result meaning is also inextricably bound up with questions of power and interests.

Thus, in line with this view, an alternative perspective is possible, reflecting the fact that the particular language evoked by New Labour allows for a set of interests to be realised whilst nonetheless remaining undisclosed, interests which in their turn give rise to a set of outcomes that might in fact be judged as unfavourable by the above authors. Indeed, it is increasingly clear that one ought to adopt a more cynical stance towards the sort of 'language' being used.

In challenging Dunne and Wheeler's assessment, Buller and Harrison point out that even "if language does indeed possess such capacity [a constitutive role], evidence that this change in discourse has been translated into actual decisions on the ground is less impressive".<sup>63</sup> According to Buller and Harrison, "[f]rom an empirical point of view, Wheeler and Dunne overestimate the amount of policy change that has taken

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<sup>62</sup> Tim Dunne & Nicholas Wheeler, 'Good International Citizenship: A Third Way for British Foreign Policy', *International Affairs*, Vol.74, No 4, 1998, p.851. See also Tim Dunne, 'The Social Construction of International Society', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol.1, No.3, 1995, pp367-389.

<sup>63</sup> Jim Buller & Vicky Harrison, 'New Labour as a 'Good International Citizen': Normative Theory and UK Foreign Policy', in Little & Wickham-Jones, *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.80.

place".<sup>64</sup> The authors point out that "[c]hanges in discourse need to be accompanied by an awareness of material constraints on policy prescriptions and a willingness to contemplate significant institutional reform".<sup>65</sup> They take the example of arms exports and the issue of human rights, asking why it is that institutional changes (in line with the new rhetoric) are not made to ensure that the Department of Trade and Industry do not themselves have the power to green light arms exports on the basis of their own determination as to ethical justification?

The above point, in line with the analysis of the previous chapter, suggests that economic concerns considered to be in the national interest in fact rub against and take precedence over an avowed concern with human rights (hence explaining why the necessary institutional changes are not forthcoming). Therefore, pursuing economic interests, at the same time as raising as a central policy a concern for human rights, remain if not antithetical then certainly problematic.<sup>66</sup>

And yet, within the discourse, and following a particular understanding of globalisation, such a tension can at least be fudged. How it is fudged, the problems that this vitiates – that is the interests this serves – again allow for an interpretation of ideology in examining the significance of globalisation to New Labour, but now with respect to foreign policy. I therefore now turn to offer an account of this 'reality' (denoting the problems to be vitiated), before re-examining the rhetoric (how it is denied), in order to make an assessment as to the significance of globalisation in this light (denoting the interests this serves). In reinterpreting the rhetoric I argue that a need to articulate a moral and more idealistic policy is achieved whilst remaining

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Buller & Harrision, *New Labour as Good International Citizen*, op.cit., p.82.

largely 'realist' in practice. In so doing, self-interest remains paramount, occurring even though it does not approximate a global or universal interest, as Cook and Blair would have us believe. I begin by examining the concern to export the idea of further liberalisation, manifested, as it is, through the idea of a third way in international affairs, though obscured through its association with globalisation.

### *Promulgating an agenda of Openness*

A central British foreign policy preoccupation for New Labour, centres on the importance of liberalisation. This is reflected in a candid recognition of the benefits to the United Kingdom of 'globalisation' (liberalisation). According to the foreign office:

The UK economy is benefiting disproportionately from globalisation. We are the world's fourth largest trading nation and second largest foreign investor. Trade is worth nearly 60% of our GDP, more than France, Germany or Italy and twice that of the US or Japan. Inward investment into the UK created 70,000 jobs last year. And we are particularly strong in business and financial services, telecoms and media- sectors which thrive on globalisation.<sup>67</sup>

However, from the analysis of the previous chapter, we can see that in promoting an agenda of liberalisation, New Labour face the difficulty of having to convince both a domestic left of centre constituency, as well as the broader international community, that as a process it is something that is universally favourable and in the interests of all. In this respect, Blair and Cook must avoid certain problems, most importantly: the idea that liberalisation, openness and deregulation do not undermine state autonomy in a deleterious manner or represent a cultural and political threat; that it does not reflect the interests of the (economically) powerful states, or manifest and reinforce

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<sup>66</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>67</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Key Foreign Policy Themes- Global Economic Issues: What's New About Globalisation?, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2001. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/news/keythemehome.asp?33>.

itself through certain institutional arrangements dictated by a minority; and that it is not in fact detrimental to development or human rights.

The particular understanding of globalisation plays an ideological role in this context, supplanting the term liberalisation for globalisation with great effect. Such a synonym allows New Labour to more effectively promulgate a particular view of contemporary change as neutral (as ‘thing-in-itself’), denoting as a result *reification*. It allows for the impression that it is nonetheless progressive (‘liberal’), denoting a strategy of *dissimulation*. And finally it is presented as globally (universally) favourable (rejecting the view that it is underpinned by a set of institutional arrangements that reflect powerful interests), thereby denoting a strategy of *universalisation* and *unification* (effected by the same experience).

The impression is that a policy of acceptance to the inevitable forces of globalisation (instead of contingent forces of liberalisation, denoting a strategy of *passivisation*) is morally desirable because in the interests of all, allowing the weaker nation-states the opportunity to benefit and the ability to determine their own futures (i.e. retain a degree of independence and control).

In order to reinforce a particular set of consequences concerning globalisation, a process of reasoning (*rationalisation*) is adopted, which attempts to persuade other nation-states, that globalisation also serves their interests. All states, it is held, understand themselves to be grappling with the same thing, and all find themselves in the same situation (*standardisation*). Globalisation takes on the status of being a permanent and natural feature of the global system (*reification*). This thereby gives

rise to the view that, like the ‘rising sun’ or the laws of physics, resistance is futile because non-sensical (*legitimisation*). However, in order to reinforce this position, the logic that unfolds from the new context must be obvious (*naturalisation*), requiring that the relations of domination that sustain this particular set of processes be ‘denied, concealed or obscured’ (*dissimulation, nominalisation/passivisation*).

Each of these strategies are therefore amenable to being interpreted as ideological. The version of both Cook and Blair stresses how globalisation generates risks, which unify in terms of experience on entities that are essentially the same. This allows Blair to posit, ‘we are all coping with the same issues’. Thus, perhaps the key element to selling ‘liberalisation’ in this narrative, relates to the legitimacy derived from approaching globalisation as something existing ‘out there’. From this reified premise, much of the subsequent argument follows. Distinct from complex accounts, Blair’s version ignores the dialectical conclusions that follow from greater interconnectedness, as well as the constitutive dimension. Thus the role power plays in constituting a set of processes favourable to some is avoided as an issue, in favour of an orientation that stresses its disembodied nature. Hence ‘globalisation’ performs the central task of unifying via a universalising objective experience.

But on the flip side, and reinforcing the aspiration to encourage further liberalisation and openness on the part of others, New Labour portray those who do not fall within this category, (that is opposed to further liberalisation) as either ‘irrational’ and conservative (presented as if denying the inevitable), or despotic (‘rogue’) regimes. Moreover, to return to these policies is to court the possibility of dragging the world into a situation, the only parallels of which are with the 1930s. So we see that the

significance of this particular orientation is that in the first instance, it clears the way for an unproblematic set of assertions related to the universally favourable set of trends actual and theoretical that currently denote the process of globalisation (liberalisation). Through a strategy of *displacement*, globalisation is associated with, amongst other things, liberalisation (liberalism), development, and progress.<sup>68</sup> On the negative side, and denoting a strategy of *fragmentation*, its antithesis is ‘isolation’, ‘protectionism’ and conservatism, both with a small and big ‘c’. Legitimacy is arrived at, thanks in part to a reified understanding, further reinforced by a particular form of reasoning.

And yet, as argued in each of the above, ‘globalisation’ is not able to take this role. First, the tenet that ‘globalisation’ generates ‘progress’ and ‘development’ essentially rests upon the view that globalisation generates economic growth. In turn, this view is premised on the idea that it is as a process – determining as it does greater openness and greater liberalisation - that growth follows. However, in light of a consideration of agency, such a position becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. As will be examined in the next chapter, governments determine the rules, and states begin from differing situations. As some are more powerful than others, and assuming that each acts according to its own (at times differing) interests, the outcomes of these negotiations can inevitably be expected to reflect the interests of the most powerful.<sup>69</sup> ‘Globalisation’ cannot therefore be thought of as a neutral panacea in this respect. It in effect hides what is really going on ‘under the surface’. And yet a reified ‘globalisation’, constituted following the ongoing negotiations above, benefits as a result of what it erases, functioning to make more palatable the actual nature of

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<sup>68</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>69</sup> One obvious consequence being the high rates of protection that remains in the agricultural sector.

contemporary processes that are seen to disproportionately favour the UK national interest.

*Globalisation, the principle of 'Non-Interference', and the 'idea of community'.*

It is not only in pursuing an agenda of liberalisation that we are able to interpret an ideological role to globalisation. An important ideological function can also be interpreted in the manner in which the 'international community' as an idea is underpinned in terms of the imperatives generated as a result of 'globalisation'. As with the domestic realm, reinforcing one's position by reference to the idea of a community of shared interests, located in terms of a shared 'objective' situation - all wrestling with the same issues – contribute as a means to validate intervention on the basis of shared moral premises.

Addressing an emergency debate at the House of Commons on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1999, Blair sought to justify intervention in Kosovo on the basis of three points: firstly, diplomatically, all attempts at a solution had been exhausted; secondly, morally, the West was obliged to act in the face of such 'barbarism'; and thirdly, legally, military intervention was nonetheless legitimate.<sup>70</sup> In time however, and as a result of dissent as to the validity of the legal and diplomatic arguments, it was the moral aim that surfaced as the key factor in explaining and justifying the campaign.<sup>71</sup> Writing in the

<sup>70</sup> Tony Blair, 'Full text to Prime Minister's speech to the nation on Kosovo, The Guardian 27<sup>th</sup> March 1999. Quoted in Will Bartlett, 'Simply the Right Thing to Do: Labour Goes to War', in Little & Wickham-Jones, *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.137. For a thorough account of Britain's role in the Kosovo campaign, see Louise Richardson, 'A Force for Good in the World? Britain's Role in the Kosovo Crisis', in Pierre Martin & Mark R. Brawley (eds.), *Alliance Politics, Kosovo, and NATO's War: Allied Force or Forced Allies?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Legally, significant question marks remained (though were dismissed as invalid by the government). Views differed within NATO and the UN Security Council, with Russia and China implacably opposed. Nonetheless NATO Secretary General, evoking resolutions 1160 and 1199, argued that there was sufficient legal basis legitimating the threat and use of force. See Alan K. Henrikson, 'The Constraint of Legitimacy: The Legal and Institutional Framework of Euro-Atlantic

Sun newspaper on the 5<sup>th</sup> April, Blair argued that “[t]his is now a battle of good against evil...our cause is just. In the battle between good and evil, we are on the right side. And we will win”.<sup>72</sup>

Enter globalisation. Blair's Chicago speech centres on the implications of globalisation for the international community. In the speech Blair specifically articulates a 'new doctrine', which qualifies the principle of non-interference.<sup>73</sup> Its timing however, is central - delivered in the midst of the Kosovo air campaign, at a time when Blair was the chief 'hawk', dismayed at the apparent unwillingness of NATO to commit ground troops;<sup>74</sup>

Twenty years ago we would not have been fighting in Kosovo. We would have turned our backs on it. The fact that we are engaged is the result of a wide range of changes – the end of the cold war, changing technology, the spread of democracy. But it is bigger than that. I believe the world has changed in a more fundamental way. Globalisation has transformed economies and our working practices. But globalisation is not just economic, it is also a political and security phenomenon.<sup>75</sup>

Thus globalisation takes on the status of 'fundament'. Extending beyond a formulation that had hitherto predominantly focussed on the economic implications

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Security', in Martin & Brawley, *Alliance Politics*, op.cit., pp41- 55. Diplomatically, many questioned the strategy at Rambouillet, which demanded a settlement that would have allowed NATO uninhibited access not just in Kosovo but the entire republic: “[t]he argument is that the United States never intended to reach agreement there but rather simply intended to attain international legitimacy for a military strike against Milosevic...No leader of the Serbs could possibly accept the terms presented to them, which were significantly harsher than those imposed after the bombing campaign”. Richardson, *A Force for Good in the World?* op.cit., p.147. See also Robert Frisk, 'The Trojan Horse that 'Started' a 79-Day War', *The Independent*, November 26<sup>th</sup> 1999, p.20.

<sup>72</sup> Tony Blair, The Sun, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1999. Such sentiments were also echoed in his 'Chicago speech': “[t]his is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values”. Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', speech to the Club of Chicago, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1999.

<sup>73</sup> To qualify the principle of non-interference, Blair suggests that five conditions must first be met: “[f]irst, are we sure of our case? War is an imperfect instrument for righting humanitarian distress, but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators. Second, have we exhausted all diplomatic options? We should always give peace every chance, as we have in the case of Kosovo. Third, on the basis of a practical assessment of the situation, are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake? Fourth, are we prepared for the long term?.. And finally, do we have national interests involved?”, Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', op.cit.

<sup>74</sup> See Rentoul, *Tony Blair*, op.cit.

(in other words moving away from the domestic implications of globalisation), Blair adopts a more capacious conceptualisation, in order to draw out the security implications of the process.<sup>76</sup> This, it can be seen, then provides the moral impetus to justify intervention. The idea of 'community' ranks as central, underpinning each of the caveats for intervening. That is, central to the argument is the idea of the pre-existence of a 'we' group, made meaningful in part, thanks to the version of globalisation adumbrated and shared by the audience.<sup>77</sup>

The key assertion is that morals are from the outset shared, but further entrenched thanks to the collective set of interests that unfold out of the globalisation process. We might say in this respect that legitimacy is secured by *universalisation*, and backed by *fragmentation*, functioning in the discourse in such a way as to silence problematic factors that would otherwise undermine the argument, but which nonetheless must be addressed should this position be tenable. Centrally, in avoiding a dialectical appreciation of globalisation, instead assuming a view of the process as bringing us closer together, Blair can assume that the 'community' is a very real entity, from which values can legitimately be expected to emanate.

In fact the above considerations, that is the need to sell liberalisation and openness as well as entrench a particular universally held set of values, can be located within a deeper and more long-term attempt to assimilate the differing national interests closer to an essentially unchanged British interest.

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<sup>75</sup> Blair, 'Doctrine of the International Community', op.cit.

<sup>76</sup> See Christopher Coker, Globalisation and Insecurity in the Twentyfirst Century: NATO and the management of Risk, Adelphi Paper, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

### *The Need for an Idealist and Realist Policy*

Each of the above - liberalisation, intervention, community - can better be evaluated in a broader sense. That is, the real significance of globalisation, in terms of the particular orientation on liberalisation, intervention, and human rights, all reflect a long-standing difficulty for Labour. In addition to and in conjunction with the need to overcome opposing interests to secure election, this long-standing difficulty concerns an ongoing requirement to pursue an overtly 'moral' foreign policy that avoids the appearance of being avowedly 'realist' in practice.

As Vickers points out, historically, and unlike the Conservatives, the Labour party has faced a number of problems with regards to foreign policy that can be explained in terms peculiar to it.<sup>78</sup> Specifically, Labour has had to grapple with the problem of articulating a moral purpose to policy, having to convince a domestic constituency of its ethical worth.<sup>79</sup> In explaining this, Vickers' draws attention in particular to two factors. The first derives from the fact that 'Labour' contains within its ranks a wide spectrum of political opinions and groupings, including Fabians, ethical and Christian socialists, pacifists and trade unionists. The party, as a result, holds to a host of positions concerning the appropriate direction and role of foreign policy.

For some, resting their position on the basis of a class analysis has led to the importance of stressing 'internationalism', i.e., class solidarity.<sup>80</sup> This has resulted in

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<sup>77</sup> On the idea that this therefore gives rise to a need for universal values see the discussion in chapter five.

<sup>78</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, 'Labour's Search for a Third Way in Foreign Policy', in Little & Wickham-Jones, *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, op.cit., pp33-48.

<sup>79</sup> See Kenneth O. Morgan, Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.154.

<sup>80</sup> See Dan Keohane, 'Labour's International Policy: A Story of Conflict and Contention', in Brian Brivati & Richard Heffernan (eds.), The Labour Party: A Centenary History, (Basingstoke: ManMillan Press Ltd., 2000), pp363-382.

the abrogation of interests when articulated in purely ‘national’ terms, and instilled a general scepticism of ‘realist’ interpretations of the international system, favouring instead a more economically based systemic analyses.<sup>81</sup>

We can therefore begin to locate a concern to promulgate an agenda of openness and liberalisation against this backdrop, seeing that it presents difficulties in that it must be sold internationally (in order that it becomes and remains a ‘reality’), whilst also remaining palatable to a potentially sceptical domestic audience – attuned to the negative (as well as positive) consequences of such actors as Multi-National companies, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and more generally the process of liberalisation and deregulation. Thus, and unlike the Conservatives, Labour face the difficulty of dealing with a position that stresses international social justice (a desire to promulgate human rights) and the inequities of unfettered markets, while nevertheless pursuing liberalisation and free trade.

An additional consideration draws attention to a strong ‘liberal’ influence running through the party, giving rise to a consistent belief in the import of international organisations and the achievement of international justice in delivering peaceable co-operative relations. This has meant that, where possible, state actions must act in accordance with and under the auspices of the ‘international community’, lending a particular significance to the role and function of international organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. It is this that partly explains the desire on the part of Blair to seek to reinforce the idea of ‘community’ between states. In the

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<sup>81</sup> Influential texts that have shaped policy in this respect, include Norman Angell, The Great Illusion, (London: Heinemann, 1933 (1910)). John Hobson, Imperialism: A Study, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988 (1905)).

case of Kosovo this did not prove particularly problematic. However, in the case of Iraq for example, justifying intervention proved far more difficult.

Finally, Vickers also points to a significant pacifistic strain in the party, deriving from the ethical socialism of many of its members, which helps explain such policies as unilateralism in the 1980s, and the tacit support of a policy of appeasement in the 1930s.<sup>82</sup>

A second factor, accounting for Labour's tendency to "search for a foreign policy that involves more than the protection of national interests", derives from the fact that Labour have actually been out of power for extensive periods during the twentieth century.<sup>83</sup> As a result:

Labour's foreign policy has developed while the party has been in opposition rather than in power. As such, it has developed more as a response to the internal dynamics of the party, the tensions between left and right factions, rather than as a response to international events.<sup>84</sup>

This helps to explain, in particular, Cook's position. As Wickham-Jones has suggested, one can in part understand the ethical dimension in terms of Cook's desire to grab the headlines in order to make a name for himself in government.<sup>85</sup> It also draws attention to the inexperience that naturally befalls New Labour, and thus possibly explains their 'idealism' in part. Fundamentally however, it explains the

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<sup>82</sup> For example, following the disastrous electoral defeat of 1931, Labour elected as its leader the pacifist George Lansbury.

<sup>83</sup> Vickers, *Labour's Search for a Third Way in Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.34.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Wickham-Jones, 'Labour Party Politics and Foreign Policy', in Little & Wickham-Jones, *New Labour Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.107. Interestingly, the problematic nature of the ethical dimension as promulgated by Cook ultimately gave rise to its quiet dismissal. On this see Paul Williams, 'The Rise and Fall of the 'Ethical Dimension', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol.15, Number 1, 2002, pp53-63.

difficulties faced as a result of confronting good intentions with the actual circumstances.

Thus, and taken together, a set of complicating factors has meant that, unlike the Conservatives, the Labour party has tended to be squeamish about the language and practice of *realpolitik*. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that when in power, successive statesmen have in effect fallen into line with this approach. As Vicker's points out, "Labour's foreign policy in office has tended to side with realism rather than idealism".<sup>86</sup> This all draws attention to the possibility of a gap existing between the practitioners in power, and the broader party and voting public at large, which in its turn also suggests the need for a bridge of sorts.<sup>87</sup>

And so we can return to the understanding of globalisation. As with the domestic realm, it is possible to re-interpret their particular understanding of globalisation in light of the function that it plays in smoothing over these difficulties, nominally bridging a potential disjunction between idealist intentions and 'reality' (traditional foreign policy practices). It is not the intention here to suggest an objective realm 'out there' that then determines a particular set of actions. Rather, I argue that a more cynical 'national interest' continues to play a role, except that now it can be presented, on a rhetorical level, along more idealist lines. And it is in this respect that we can reappraise the view that the national and global interest now coincide because of

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<sup>86</sup> Vickers, *Labour's Search for a Third Way in Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.34. See also Martin Lawrence & John Garret, British Foreign Policy: Challenges and Choices for the Twentyfirst Century, (London: Pinter, 1997).

<sup>87</sup> This is well illustrated in assessing the position taken by Atlee and Bevin immediately following the war. In contrast to the wishes of many in the party, Bevin and Atlee nevertheless "focussed on the national interest in a world dominated by power politics". Hence, at the risk of profoundly alienating the Soviets, Bevin nonetheless pushed forward the formation of NATO. Alan Bullock, Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.66. Quoted in Keohane, *Labour's International Policy*, op.cit., p.371.

globalisation, that 'globalisation' gives rise to universal values, and why globalisation ontologically, takes the status of a 'thing-in-itself', thus erasing agency and thereby masking issues of power (who shapes the process, determines its meaning and thus reproduces a set of processes in a particular form).

In each of the above, the realist position is apparently subverted – whilst in no way altering the content of foreign policy radically. The pursuit of the national interest – unchanged in any significant respects from the Major period - is now nonetheless part of a third way, one that favours the interests of all.

### Conclusion

The significance of globalisation (judged in terms of its implications) has become one way in which New Labour has been judged and understood in a comparative context. Views differ. In this chapter however, I have approached the significance of 'globalisation' in a different way. Based on a particular methodological orientation and oriented in terms of a particular set of contextual postulates I have attempted to make sense of 'globalisation' as a 'facilitator', in the sense that it facilitates the construction of a possible reality.

In the introduction to the thesis I suggested that Blair and New Labour are in effect 'walking a tightrope'. The Blair project reflects in many respects the most contemporary (and successful) attempt at confronting a problem faced by *all* previous Labour administrations. The metaphor of a balancing act is appropriate in that in the context of a first past the post system New Labour, in order to get elected, must balance between the perceived interests of an 'old Labour' electorate and party,

committed to a particular set of policies, and an increasingly significant middle class electorate, suspicious of (and at times at odds with) this more traditional set of group interests.

One particularly stark example, as argued, reflects the need to retain credibility in terms of the ‘City’ and ‘finance capital’, (requiring in its contemporary form, budgetary austerity, free trade and price stability) and yet committing itself to ‘values’ of the left and interests of the ‘North’. Crude though this schema may be, it is real, and recognised in the thinking of Blair. Third Way theory, I argue, constitutes this function. It utilises the contemporary preoccupation with ‘globalisation’ in an attempt to rhetorically (and therefore in time actually) resolve these concerns. It is then, a contemporary attempt to pull off the needed balancing act; designed to mitigate and transcend, validated according to new times, and robust enough it believes, to offer a new way, it nonetheless can be evaluated in terms of the desire to hold on to power.

And whilst this gives rise to the need for a mechanism to resolve certain dilemmas at the domestic level, paralleling this, a particular take on globalisation also allows for the resolution of certain dilemmas at the international level. Here, it is possible to understand the utility of globalisation in terms of the function it plays in obscuring otherwise problematic issues that centre on the need for an overtly ‘moral’ foreign policy; and the need to sell a selective liberalisation and to convince others of the worthiness of a particular take on this process.

However the key point is that globalisation is not just a convenient smoke screen, but also something more. It constitutes a tool, whereby a set of circumstances can be actualised; hence the idea of globalisation as 'facilitator'. Nevertheless, as has been stressed throughout, timing and circumstances remain as central features when coming to terms with the function and significance of globalisation. In the final chapter, I now move beyond the above, to map out the future significance of globalisation to the party, taking into account the shifting set of positions on globalisation that are increasingly crystallising in the public domain, in an attempt to evaluate the impact that this will have for the possibility of reification and legitimisation occurring in the longer term.

## Chapter 7

### Contesting The Future Significance of Globalisation: The Challenge of the New Social Movements

*“Globalisation is not a given, like the weather. It functions according to a set of rules designed and negotiated by economic actors such as governments and businesses. The outcome of such negotiations inevitably reflects the relative economic and political power of the actors involved”.*<sup>1</sup>

*“There is a current of fear flowing through most countries of the world at the changes being brought by globalisation”.*<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have examined the significance and function that a particular understanding of globalisation has had in the New Labour discourse. I have questioned this understanding and drawn attention to certain strategies, which in explaining its application can be interpreted as ideological - accounting for its reproduction in a particular form in the British context. In doing so, I have avoided relying upon an essentialist view of globalisation, instead drawing on the important discussions in the academic literature in a largely negative way, that is to say, I have used this literature to debunk the particular account offered by Tony Blair and Robin Cook.

However, in addition there remains a more ‘positive’ side to the contribution of the literature, in that it has helped crystallise a new opposition that has found expression

<sup>1</sup> Duncan Green & Claire Melamed, ‘A Human Development Approach to Globalisation’, joint submission to the government White Paper on Globalisation and Development, Christian Aid/ CAFOD, June 2000. <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0006glob/global2.htm>, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Clare Short, ‘Advancing the World Trade debate: Beyond Seattle’, speech at the Commonwealth Trade Congress, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

mainly through the efforts of a mistakenly named though highly influential ‘anti-globalisation’ movement. In this chapter, I therefore examine the significance of this movement, and assess the future consequences that it will have for the significance of ‘globalisation’ for New Labour.

To do this, I begin the chapter with a brief outline of what the movement, disparate and fragile as it is, has achieved. I assess its significance, concentrating in the main on the reformist elements. I argue that with respect to ‘globalisation’, their chief contribution has been to disclose certain underlying mechanisms and power interests, in practice identifying agency within its processes. The effect of this is to undermine a key attribute of ‘globalisation’; its obscure and obfuscating nature.<sup>3</sup> However, this is coupled with a set of popular concerns for development and poverty alleviation. As a result, the movement’s claims take on a particular moral and political force, not only challenging the progressive and desirable assumptions often ascribed to the process, but also offering a critique that in some ways particularly appeals to those on the ‘left’, generally more sceptical about the benefits of the free market and of liberalisation in general. It is in this respect that the movement is particularly important.

I then turn to the speeches that begin to pick up on these themes. In the case of New Labour, the likes of Robin Cook, Gordon Brown and Claire Short all begin to modify the New Labour view in light of this changing outlook. This modified approach begins to develop towards the end of 1999, in particular in response to the events of Seattle. As an alternative, it is characterised by an emphasis being laid on the

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<sup>3</sup> James Mittelman, The Globalization Syndrome, Transformation and Resistance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

importance of responsibility, fairness, and the need not just to respond to globalisation, but also to manage the process along particular lines, and with particular interests in mind.

Finally, in evaluating this, I point out how these ideas potentially represent a fundamental break in thinking, irreconcilable with the New Labour account hitherto examined, concluding in this respect that 'globalisation' may come to haunt New Labour as it evolves in a potentially subversive direction, one that fundamentally undermines the contentions of Blair and his particular form of Third Way thinking. However, I conclude, though possible, this is only one of a number of possibilities, and as such the context still holds out the possibility of pursuing an agenda that still disproportionately favours the British national interest (to do with further liberalisation), as well as New Labour.

#### The Challenge of The Anti-Globalisation 'Movement': Unpacking the Process and Debunking the Logic

An important element to my analysis has been the significance pertaining to the hegemonic understanding of globalisation. This points not just to the fact that one version has been dominant over time, but also how a particular version can seem obvious, how it can go unquestioned in the discourse. Though globalisation has for New Labour hitherto functioned to validate and legitimate a set of positions, it has itself gone largely unquestioned. The New Labour position has explicitly benefited from this, in that difficulties that the Labour party may have faced, both at the domestic and international level, have been avoided. In line with the hermeneutic method, the overall impact of this, at least within the context of the UK, has been to

reproduce 'globalisation' as if it were in fact as Blair had originally understood it, i.e. it has been 'reified'.

However the vague understanding largely prevalent at the time of election in 1997 is now becoming increasingly fraught, jeopardising the possibility for reification in the future. This is not simply as a result of the literature on globalisation calling into question their view, but also thanks to an influential set of positions often collectively dubbed as the 'anti-globalisation' movement.<sup>4</sup>

Though containing disparate groups, each with differing and sometimes contradictory agendas (hence in Hertz's view best described as 'moment'), this collective has nonetheless shifted the terms of the debate, and disrupted that which once seemed obvious.<sup>5</sup> Thus the significance of this counter movement derives not so much from the cogency of their arguments, which had in the main already been addressed in the globalisation literature, but from the fact that their challenge has captured a broader public imagination. That is, they have managed to overturn the possibility of elites relying on any 'common sense' view on the topic, with all that that entails.

Their influence is therefore particularly acute, given that many of these groups function as professional lobbyists and campaigners. And so whereas an academic text can to an extent be ignored or brushed under the carpet, such possibilities remain

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<sup>4</sup> Alternative names include 'civil society movement', 'the global justice movement', 'global social movement' and 'the anti-capitalist movement'.

<sup>5</sup> The fact that they represent a 'moment' stems from the coincidence of interests, all being unified in the face of a common opposition to 'globalisation' selectively understood.

considerably more limited, given, as Cook has recognised, membership of NGO's in Britain outnumbers political party membership.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, the concerns expressed by many of these movements, focussed in the main on poverty eradication, development and the environment, have also meant that individuals such as Clare Short at the Department for International Development (DFID) have had to confront their ideas on an almost daily basis. Finally, this is also significant given New Labour's avowed commitment to meeting certain International Development Targets (IDTs) by 2015.<sup>7</sup>

This all draws the party into a series of challenging issue areas that are profoundly tied into discussion on the particular nature and form of globalisation. In order to make further sense of the challenge that this change represents, I begin by identifying the various strands of this counter movement and the key events that may be said to have given rise to it. To do this I refer to the work of Green and Griffith, and Desai and Said. Both distinguish three sub-groups. Focussing in particular on the so-called 'anti-globalisation' groups, NGO policy analysts Green and Griffiths, distinguish between 'statists', 'reformists' and those in favour of 'alternatives'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to Cook, "[t]here are... in Britain five times as many members of environmental NGOs as there are members of political parties. Prudent politicians treat them with respect". Robin Cook, 'The Challenges of Globalisation', speech to the Trilateral Commission at the Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

<sup>7</sup> These commitments include: reducing the proportion of people living in poverty by half by 2015; ensuring universal primary school provision by 2015; the reduction in infant, child and maternal mortality; and a commitment to growth policies that are 'environmentally sustainable'.

<sup>8</sup> Duncan Green & Mathew Griffith, 'Globalization and its Discontents', *International Affairs*, Vol.78, No.1, 2002, pp49-68. See also Meghnad Desai & Yahia Said, 'The New Anti-Capitalist Movement: Money and Global Civil Society', in Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius & Mary Kaldor, (eds.), Global Civil Society 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp51-78. Desai and Said refer to four groups: 'isolationists'; 'alternatives'; 'reformists'; and 'supporters'.

### *The 'anti-globalisation' myth.*

Green and Griffiths understand globalisation to mean “the increasing interconnectedness of individuals, groups, companies and countries”, and, as a result, do not believe that such a broad set of trends ought necessarily to be resisted.<sup>9</sup> This is important, in that in explaining the nature of the counter-globalisation movement, the authors concern themselves with the resistances that have developed in response to particular aspects to the current form that globalisation takes. This they dub ‘corporate’, or ‘neo-liberal’ globalisation. It is only in recognition of this that one can make sense of a ‘counter’ or ‘anti’ movement.

Tracing the origins of this movement, the authors point to a series of key events and perceptions, which they suggest have functioned as a sort of unifying glue. The authors begin by pointing to the near default of the Mexican peso in 1982, which, they argue, prompted the end of “import substituting industrialization” as a valid development strategy, and concomitantly presaged “the political influence of the IMF, World Bank and international capital markets”.<sup>10</sup> This increased the influence of these institutions, and led to an ability on their part, to initiate far reaching ‘structural adjustment’ programmes in line with a particular neoliberal understanding of development, one that arguably remains prevalent to this day.<sup>11</sup>

With the fall of the Berlin Wall however, Green and Griffiths also point to a crisis of sorts that developed amongst the left, a crisis that occurred at the very time that the

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<sup>9</sup> Green & Griffiths, *Globalization and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.51.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Structural adjustment’, refers to a set of economic measures implemented in return for debt relief and financial assistance. In line with neoliberal tenets, these measures invariably involve: liberalising markets, privatisation, and cutting government spending. See Tony Killick, IMF Programmes in Developing Countries: Design and Impact, (London: Routledge, 1995).

ideas of the New Right had risen to ascendancy. A weak ‘left’, and a strong ‘new right’ resulted in a dominant version of the “global market based on the aggressive economic model of Anglo-Saxon capitalism”.<sup>12</sup> ‘Globalization’, “quickly became shorthand for this model of expansion - a heady and complex mix of technological, economic, political and cultural change”.<sup>13</sup> Hence “the origins of the movement are rooted in and in large part unified by this period of globalisation”.<sup>14</sup>

This draws attention to the significance of the strong thesis, in that it is this view that the anti-‘globalisation’ movement coalesce around. The relationship is symbiotic: “[a]s globalization consolidated and expanded its influence, disquiet over its nature and impact grew in many initially disconnected arenas in both the developing and developed worlds”.<sup>15</sup> Of particular concern was the impression that globalisation was eroding national sovereignty, drawing “attention to the undemocratic and closed nature of increasingly powerful global institutions and the influence and lack of accountability of global corporations”.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the strong thesis applauded such developments, the counter movements drew the exact opposite conclusion, expressing a concern not mirrored in the New Labour discourse, but one nonetheless animated by leftist ideals.

Following the Asian crisis of 1997, confidence in neoliberal solutions, and the progressive assumptions underlying a particular version of globalisation – calling for greater openness and deregulation as a result of a harmony of interests – therefore

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<sup>12</sup> Green & Griffiths, *Globalization and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.51. The ‘left’ in Europe had in fact been in a crisis of sorts from the early eighties, as illustrated by Francoise Mitterand’s disastrous effort at Keynesian inspired reflationary tactics in 1981.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.57.

became increasingly tenuous and suspect.<sup>17</sup> This was further exacerbated as a result of the “catastrophe of free market reform in Russia”<sup>18</sup> Each combined to reinforce a concern about the efficacy “of structural adjustment programmes, and trade liberalization” more generally.<sup>19</sup> Green and Griffith sum up the conjunction:

[i]ncreasing corporate power and social inequality catalysed the traditional left and a whole host of other left-of-centre actors. Structural adjustment programmes and growing Southern marginalization and inequality radicalized civil society and some political parties in the developing world.<sup>20</sup>

However, though ‘civil society’ was becoming increasingly radicalised, it was not until the end of 1999 that their influence in relation to globalisation was to become of central significance. In particular, two events are notable: Seattle (and the subsequent ‘anti-globalisation’ demonstrations), and in relation to New Labour, the publication of the Globalisation and Development White Paper.

The general impact of Seattle to date remains a largely under-researched area. However, at least in the immediate aftermath of the demonstrations, it can be seen as acting as a sort of wake up call. According to the International Herald Tribune, in their leader ‘Seattle Protests Open Up the Globalisation Debate’:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Fareed Zakaria points out that since the 1997 crisis, the Indonesian economy has almost halved. By way of a contrast, Malaysia, in adopting a more protectionist strategy - implementing a policy of capital controls - has managed to buck this trend. The lesson drawn from this by many Indonesians, according to Fareed, is that they should have “defied the IMF”. See Fareed Zakaria, ‘Back to the future: globalization grows up and gets political’, International Herald Tribune, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2001, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Green & Griffiths, *Globalization and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.52. See also John Price, ‘Asian Economic Turmoil: A Crisis of Globalization’, in Stephen McBride & John Wiseman, (eds.), *Globalization and its Discontents*, (London: MacMillan, 2000), pp187-199. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “since liberalisation began in Russia in 1989, inequality has doubled, wages [have] fallen [sic] by almost half, and male life expectancy has declined by more than four years to sixty years”. Human Development Report, (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1999) p.85. Quoted in Green & Melamed, *A Human Development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit., p.28.

<sup>19</sup> Green and Griffiths, *Globalization and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.57.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.53.

If any clear message came through the clouds of tear gas and the broken glass here this week, it was that the terms of the debate about free trade have changed. It is no longer a debate about trade at all, but rather a debate about globalization, a process that many now understand affects not only traditional economic factors such as jobs and incomes but also the food they eat, the air they breath, the quality of medical care and the social and cultural milieu in which they live. The trade debate, once the province of a tight group of technocrats, business leaders, trade lawyers and academics, has now spilled out onto the public streets and private living rooms.<sup>21</sup>

In the British context, general concerns amongst reformist groups about globalisation was not mitigated following the publication of the White Paper on Globalisation and Development. During the consultation period of 2000, Green and Griffiths point out NGOs such as Christian Aid, CAFOD and Oxfam began to develop their critique of the interpretation of globalisation offered by New Labour.<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of this 'debate', NGO groups began to question the assumption that globalisation leads to development via liberalisation, recognising that it was in fact a proposition based on the 'sketchiest of evidence'. Indeed, "[f]or many NGO's the empirical flimsiness of the intellectual case for liberalization was one of the main revelations of the White Paper".<sup>23</sup> Significantly, it became increasingly clear as a result of this, that what was being contested, for example vis-à-vis the government on the drafting of the White Paper was, in effect, the "*future direction of globalization*".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Steven Pearlstein, 'Seattle Protests Open Up the Globalisation Debate', International Herald Tribune, December 4-5, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Two key texts submitted to the government during the 'consultation' process, were: Oxfam's fifty six page exegesis entitled 'Globalisation', Submission to the Government's White Paper on Globalisation, Oxfam Policy Paper, May 2000; and, Christian Aid and CAFOD's joint submission, 'A Human Development Approach to Globalisation', also fifty six pages in length. [www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0006glob2.htm](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0006glob2.htm). See also Oxfam Parliamentary Briefing, 'The White Paper on Globalisation', Number 12, December 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Green and Griffiths, *Globalization and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.59.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.54. Emphasis added.

This is reflected in the statement by Christian Aid/ CAFOD. Understanding globalisation to mean “a process of increasing interconnectedness of individuals, groups, companies and countries”, the statement continues:

the debate [on globalisation] should not be about whether we are pro or anti-globalisation. Some form of globalisation is given. But globalisation is not the same as the weather – *it can be managed.*<sup>25</sup>

This is important because it not only points to a number of erroneous and perhaps ideological elements to the counter positions often adumbrated vis-à-vis this ‘movement of movements’, but because it also draws attention to a change in orientation that potential ‘management’ suggests. What was not being opposed was ‘globalisation’.<sup>26</sup>

Green and Griffiths point out that though the primary agent unifying many of these groupings comes from an ‘opposition’ to many of the assumptions associated with globalisation, the vast bulk of the movement is nonetheless *not* ‘anti-globalisation’ *per se*. Desai and Said agree, observing about this broad coalition of groups that they in fact:

rarely attack globalisation as such, targeting instead corporate globalisation, global capitalism, the neo-liberal order, multi-national companies, international financial institutions (IFIs), and trade agreements. Whatever the target, however, these protests are often branded as anti-globalisation.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Green & Melamed, *A Human Development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit., p.2, emphasis added. This definition is markedly different from the definition offered in 1997. Here the same NGO understand globalisation to mean: “the integration of local and national economies into a global economy. The process is driven by new technologies and by the lowering of economic barriers”. Mathew Lockwood & Peter Madden, ‘Closer Together, Further Apart: A Discussion Paper on Globalisation’, September 1997, Christian Aid/ CAFOD. See appendix 1. [www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9707clos/closer.htm](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9707clos/closer.htm). This highlights the increased recognition of the limited definition (paralleling the strong thesis) hitherto adopted, and how this understanding has radically changed over the period of just two years.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Aid is not alone in their concern to move beyond the idea of an either/ or position for or against globalisation. As Mike Bygrave in his examination of the ‘anti-globalisation’ movement after September 11 points out, the “ ‘anti-globalisation movement’ turns out to be a name invented by journalists that has stuck. All... activists reject it, not least because it offers ammunition to opponents”. Mike Bygrave, ‘Where did all the Protesters Go?’ The Observer, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Desai & Said, *The New Anti-Capitalist Movement*, op.cit., p.51.

This not only draws attention to the erroneous labeling of the group, but also highlights the importance of making a distinction concerning the plural positions that make up this so-called anti-globalisation movement. According to Green and Griffiths, the so-called anti-globalisation movement, “is neither solidly anti-globalization, nor a single movement”.<sup>28</sup> Though there are “some overlapping aims”, so there are “significant cleavages”.<sup>29</sup> To make sense of this plurality, the authors make a tripartite distinction, distinguishing between ‘statists’, ‘alternatives’ and ‘reformists’.<sup>30</sup>

The first group, ‘the statists’, reject globalisation, understanding it to be simply corporate globalisation, and instead favour a return to the state. Compiled in the main of groups of the ‘traditional left’, and though still ‘internationalist’, this grouping nonetheless seeks domestic protection via erecting barriers to trade and competition. Globalisation, on this view, is set up as the antithesis of state control. Thus adopting a strong thesis understanding, the approach promotes a reversal of this trend.

The ‘alternatives’ are considered to be the most difficult group to define. Though highly visible (Seattle, Gothenburg, Genoa), they are generally “small, decentralized and strongly ‘anticorporate’”, and often violent.<sup>31</sup> They are nonetheless significant in that they are often what the media associate with the anti-globalisers.

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<sup>28</sup> Green & Griffiths, *Globalisation and its Discontents*, op.cit., p.50.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

The final group Green and Griffith identify are the ‘reformists’, which “make up the majority of formally structured groups involved in the movement, or at least dominate the thinking of their leaderships”.<sup>32</sup> In this chapter, it is the ‘reformists’ that are considered most significant in the context of thinking about globalisation in the UK, as it is they who have the broadest membership, and the strongest influence on policy formulation, and it is they who seek to overturn (without dropping the term itself) the dominant understanding of globalisation.<sup>33</sup>

So in what way has this movement been influential? I suggest that three areas are of particular significance when judged against the New Labour position.<sup>34</sup> First, this movement has challenged the assumption that liberalisation (and therefore globalisation) leads to development, challenging the idea that its current form is necessarily progressive, desirable or in the interests of all - ideas that all reside at the heart of the New Labour account. This challenge involves tackling the three mantras of the strong globalisation thesis: that free trade, freedom of investment, and freedom of capital are beneficial and in the interests of all, suggesting in its place the continued validity of ‘protecting’ one’s economy in certain instances; depending on the particular national circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the reform movement is also significant because it shines a spotlight on the operations of key agents and their views (thus unmasking and politicising the process), in order to explain how the current processes associated with globalisation are

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> This category broadly encompasses Christian Aid/ CAFOD, Oxfam, Amnesty International, The World Development Movement, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, though by no means assumes that their policies are identical.

<sup>34</sup> I do not attempt an exhaustive account, rather simply draw attention to what I believe are the key parts of their challenge.

constituted. This all follows from a third key contribution: the de-bunking of the idea of globalisation as a ‘thing-in-itself’. This reorients the role of governments away from responding to globalisation (as ‘thing-in-itself’), towards managing a contingent set of processes, and in the case of the UK, managing these processes in order to realise the IDTs.

In contrast to the New Labour view of the inevitability of free trade coming about because it is the only route for any country in the face of globalisation, from the perspective of an interest in development and poverty alleviation/ eradication, the reformist movement instead places its emphasis on ‘fair trade’.<sup>36</sup> According to the reformist position, liberalisation does not in and of itself deliver economic growth. It therefore does not necessarily imply development as the process is considered to be profoundly inequitable. Such a sentiment came to the fore during the consultation period of 2000.

Stressing the idea that ‘openness’ is in certain instances deleterious, this contrary position moves away from a ‘one size fits all’ approach (something implied in the initial structural adjustment programmes, and strongly criticised in the sceptical critique of globalisation). Instead an increasing recognition of the validity of protectionism is recognised, for example in relation to the cultivation of infant industries and the need for more interventionist industrial policies.<sup>37</sup> From where does this derive?

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<sup>35</sup> This however, does not include any challenge to the idea of a free movement of labour.

<sup>36</sup> See Oxfam Policy Paper, ‘Globalisation’, *submission to the Government’s White Paper on Globalisation*, op.cit.

<sup>37</sup> See UNCTAD Trade Development Report, (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1999), p.131.

At the most fundamental level, the reformists argue that there is in fact little evidence proving that liberalisation leads to development via economic growth. Citing the World Bank's draft report 2000/01 Christian Aid point out that:

Whether growth translates into significant reductions in poverty depends on a number of factors. The degree of inequality in society matters. Studies find that the responsiveness of income poverty to growth increases significantly as inequality is lower. Initial levels of inequality in assets (land and education) also determine the poverty impact of growth, as do gender and ethnic inequalities.<sup>38</sup>

This point is reflected in the work of two leading trade economists, Rodriguez and Rodrik. They point out "there has been a tendency in academic and policy discussion to greatly overstate the systematic evidence in favour of trade openness".<sup>39</sup> What is more, research suggests that this applies not only in the short run, but also the long run.<sup>40</sup> This limitation is mirrored in the New Labour position. According to Simms, this is because of "...a blind spot where more critical research emerges from UN trade, environment and development agencies."<sup>41</sup> The point is made that hitherto, DFID has tended to rely on World Bank and International Monetary Fund sources.

The final piece of the jigsaw, explaining the emphasis being laid on 'fair' as opposed to 'free' trade, holds that if liberalisation is to facilitate economic growth then there must also occur a degree of redistribution.<sup>42</sup> In other words, it is held that questions

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<sup>38</sup> World Bank Report (Draft), World Bank, (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2000), paragraph 13

<sup>39</sup> Francisco Rodriguez & Dani Rodrik, 'Trade Policy and Economic Growth: A Sceptic's Guide to the Cross-National Evidence', National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, 7081, April 1999, p.39. Quoted in Green & Melemed, *A Human Development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit., p.26.

<sup>40</sup> See Mathias Lundberg & Llyn Squire, 'The Simultaneous Evolution of Growth and Inequality', World Bank Mimeo, 1999. Quoted in Green & Melemed, *A Human Development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit., p.28.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Simms, 'Time to Say a Daily Prayer for the Global Economy', special supplement, Globalisation: A Report to Accompany the New White Paper on Eliminating World Poverty, (produced in association with the Department for Trade and Industry). The Independent, 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2000, p.9.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Oxfam states "globalisation... is redistributing wealth and opportunity in the wrong direction, from the poor to the rich. This is morally indefensible, economically inefficient, and socially unsustainable...[w]hat is needed is a system of global governance capable of managing a process of

relating to equity must be factored in if development is to be achieved.<sup>43</sup> As Green and Melemed point out; “equity and redistribution are increasingly recognised as the ‘missing link’ between globalisation and poverty reduction”.<sup>44</sup> Citing evidence from the World Bank, they continue:

Improved equity not only leads to faster poverty reduction for a given amount of growth, but also leads to faster growth. What is good for poor people is good for the economy as a whole. Yet up to now, globalisation has frequently been linked to increasing inequality.<sup>45</sup>

Given their commitment to the IDTs, this poses a particular challenge to New Labour. As the World Bank points out, “if growth rates and levels of inequality continue unchanged, the headcount index of \$1 per day poverty will fall from 24 per cent to 22 per cent – far short of halving world poverty by 2015”.<sup>46</sup> Thus the very targets that New Labour are committed to achieving are only attainable in light of a degree of redistribution.

Finally, in highlighting the need for ‘fair’ as opposed to simply ‘free’ trade, the reformist position also stresses agency in the constitution of the process, lending a negative interpretation to the role of corporations, the IMF, World Bank, and more

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globalisation with redistribution in favour of the poor.” Oxfam Policy Paper, ‘*Globalisation, submission to the Government’s White Paper on Globalisation*’, op.cit., pp8-9.

<sup>43</sup> According to the World Bank, “[t]he costs of adjusting to greater openness are borne exclusively by the poor, regardless of how long the adjustment takes. In addition, the consequences of terms of trade changes are far greater for the poor than for the middle or wealthy classes. The poor are far more vulnerable to shifts in relative international prices, and this vulnerability is magnified by the country’s openness to trade”. Lundberg & Squire, *The Simultaneous Evolution of Growth and Inequality*, op.cit. See also Oxfam Briefing Paper, ‘Harnessing Trade for Development’, 2001.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/trade/trade.html>

<sup>44</sup> Green & Melemed, *A Human development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit., p.2

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. The particular evidence that they cite refers to the projections contained in the World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects 2000. The position is premised on the fact that if the IDT targets that the UK have committed themselves to meeting are to be met, then the increasing inequality currently underway must be curtailed. Quoting the UNDP Human Development Report 1999, they point to a worsening situation in Eastern Europe, China, Indonesia and Thailand. UNCTAD Trade and Development Report, (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1999), p.36. See also Oxfam Policy Papers, ‘Growth with Equity is Good for the Poor’, June 2000.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/equity/equity00.htm>

generally ‘Western’ interests in authoring particular trade and investment agreements.<sup>47</sup> The effect of this is to politicise the process along negative as opposed to positive lines.

So in addition to calls for a degree of ‘redistribution’, the likes of Oxfam are also led to call for a radical restructuring of the above international organisations. The argument is made that if globalisation is to be just and in the interests of all (hence not to be resisted), then first and foremost a more equal and fair voice must be given to all major players and stakeholders, particularly the developing countries, but also non-governmental and grass roots organisations. This therefore precludes the possibility of simply ‘embracing’ the process. On this view, the inequitable outcomes associated with the particular form that ‘globalisation’ currently takes can largely be explained in terms of the key players who have had the power to determine its form. As quoted at the top of the chapter, the view is taken that what is currently denoted as being globalisation is in fact the result of:

a set of rules designed and negotiated by economic actors such as governments and businesses. The outcome of such negotiations inevitably reflects the relative economic and political power of the actors involved.<sup>48</sup>

The aim is therefore to give lie to the idea that the ‘agreements’ arrived at at the international level arise out of a natural harmony of interests of all of the signatory states, or come about as the inevitable response to a new context. Christian aid point out that:

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<sup>46</sup> World Bank, ‘Global Economic Prospects 2000’. Quoted in Christian Aid, *Closer Together Further Apart*, op.cit., p.8.

<sup>47</sup> This is because it is these institutions that explain the current set of processes associated with the kind of globalisation that is criticised. See Joseph Stiglitz, Globalization and its Discontents, (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Green & Melamed, *A Human Development Approach to Globalisation*, op.cit.

[o]ver half of the least-developed country members of the WTO have no representation in Geneva...[t]hose developing countries that do...often have only one person responsible for all negotiations...where there can be more than 40 meetings a week. By contrast, the US has over 250 negotiators.<sup>49</sup>

According to Oxfam, this unsurprisingly explains why “current WTO trade rules favour the interests of the rich and powerful at the expense of people living in poverty”.<sup>50</sup> What is needed therefore, are for the rules of the game to be rewritten in order that the majority ‘poor’ benefit.<sup>51</sup>

So in summary, there are a number of significant features to the reformist ‘anti-(current) globalisation’ argument. To begin with they effectively debunk the idea of inevitability in the face of globalisation. This brings into the spotlight the conduct and intentions of agents who had hitherto remained as obscure ‘ghosts in the machine’, lending a more political dimension to the discussion of ‘globalisation’: ‘it’ can no longer be evoked to explain, but once more must be subject to explanation. Actors within the process are held up to scrutiny and judged in terms of their particular interests. The concern becomes not what globalisation is, but what it should be.

In demanding a managerial and constitutive role to be played by government, the reformists also call for greater equity. With the need for alternative ‘voices’ to be

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<sup>49</sup> Christian Aid, ‘Fair Shares? Transnational Companies, the WTO and the World’s Poorest Communities’. September 1999. [www.chrsitian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9911fair/fairshar.htm](http://www.chrsitian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9911fair/fairshar.htm).

<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, “[w]orld trade rules have been developed by the rich and powerful on the basis of their narrow commercial interests. Rich countries and powerful corporations have captured a disproportionate share of the benefits of trade, leaving developing countries and poor people worse off. Trade rules should be judged on their contribution to poverty reduction, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability”. Oxfam Briefing Paper, ‘Harnessing Trade for Development’, 2000. <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/trade/trade.html>

<sup>51</sup> In an open letter calling for institutional changes to the WTO for example, a number of NGOs called for a series of reforms in order to overcome certain ‘systemic inequalities and imbalances’ within the institution. Joint NGO Open Letter on Institutional Reforms in The WTO, October 2001. Friends of the Earth, Oxfam International, Action Aid, World Wildlife Fund. [www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org). For a more specific list of the sort of grievances that the NGOs have in mind see Oxfam Policy Papers, ‘Eight Broken

heard, a challenge is therefore presented to New Labour that is particularly acute given that, as stated in the previous chapter, they are particularly susceptible to the need for voicing not only a moral dimension to foreign policy, but also to be seen to be credible in the eyes of the left. The increasingly polemical connotations attached to the current set of manifestations dubbed globalisation therefore challenges the possibility of a position being staked that represents a move beyond left and right, realist and idealist.

### Responding to the Challenge.

Given the significance that globalisation plays in the discourse, it is crucial that New Labour are able to either counter or incorporate any challenge to the idea of globalisation to which they hold. No longer able to rely on an uncontroversial and obscure understanding of globalisation to legitimate their position, increasingly, New Labour has had to confront this challenge. However, a complexity, generated out of the amorphous and evolutionary nature of this shift in understanding of globalisation, means that any clear interpretation is not possible. I suggest that currently a number of trends co-exist at odds with one another.

First, there occurs a tendency to dismiss the challenge posed by these groups, denoting in an ideological vain *expurgation of the other*. In this sense, Blair dismisses participants in this counter trend as a 'travelling circus of anarchists', motivated by arguments that are 'spurious'. The assumption here is that 'globalisation' remains significant for the same reasons posited from the beginning, and that the challenge is largely muddle-headed and incorrect.

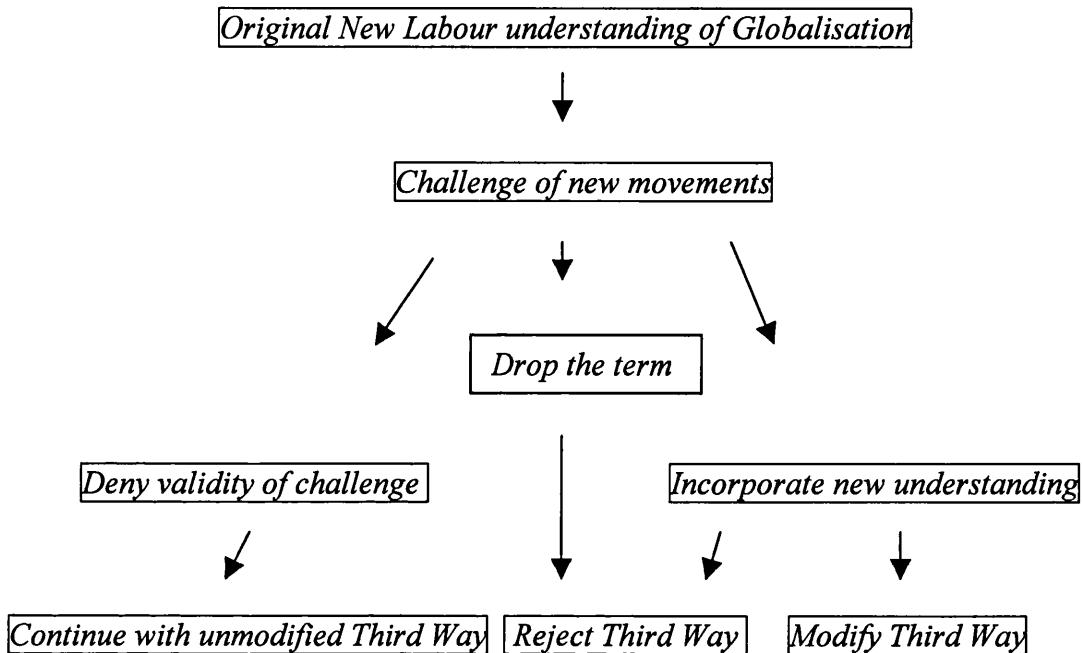
Alternatively, one can also interpret a strategy of *differentiation*, in which this counter-movement is split. Thus weakened, it loses some of its significance, and constitutes a diminished threat. It is this secondary strategy that comes into play ever more seriously as New Labour alter their position on globalisation in line with the arguments proffered by many of the dissenters on ‘globalisation’ (traditionally understood).<sup>52</sup> This is a perilous position however, in that it may have the effect of entirely undermining the Third Way argument, which has hitherto rested upon a particular understanding of globalisation. This altered version challenges the possibility of a ‘third way’ (domestic and foreign). It challenges the view that globalisation entails a ‘logic’ that must be accepted on its own terms, and it questions deeper (masked) assumptions relating to neutrality, progress, liberalisation, unification and (benign) agency. Should New Labour incorporate the arguments forwarded by the reformists, they will therefore be forced to contradict earlier positions staked in light of their understanding of globalisation.

This all points to the future possibility of a third strategy: that the term will over time be dropped as *explanans*, reflecting its increasingly problematical associations and connotations. Either way, we see that the future function and significance of globalisation is likely to be significantly altered. In order to understand the significance of globalisation in light of the development of these recent movements, it is worth developing a schematic set of logical scenarios:

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter two.

*Assessing the significance of globalisation in light of new movements. Fig.1.*



In the above figure I have sketched out the potential future consequences of an altered understanding of globalisation following the challenge of the new social movements. I argue that there are potentially three possible scenarios. In examining the impact up until 2001/2, one may tentatively argue that the direction, as determined by the actual response so far registered, suggests one of two possible outcomes - either 'rejection of a third way', reflecting a return to a more traditional leftist approach, or 'modification' of what the 'third way' programme is. This reflects ambivalence amongst key members still as yet uncertain as to the profundity of the challenge, and the future opportunities the term affords, as well, it might be suggested, as reflecting the internal balance of power of the key members of the cabinet.

### *Meeting the Challenge through Expurgation.*

Capturing the sense in which we may say New Labour opts for a strategy of expurgation in the face of the globalisation protests is the following statement from Stephen Byers:

[w]e need to be in no doubt. The backlash against globalisation is real and it is gaining power and momentum. An unholy coalition has been cobbled together. Media aware pressure groups and old-fashioned protectionists stand together shoulder to shoulder. Last December from the convention centre in Seattle through the clouds of tear gas I could see red-neck steel workers from Philadelphia walking alongside anarchists. Grandmothers dressed as turtles alongside unemployed textile workers from downtown Seattle.<sup>53</sup>

Byers, in a few brief sentences, is able to convey the image of the Seattle protesters as constituting an ‘unholy’ coalition, encompassing anarchists, ‘red necks’, protectionists and the unemployed (not to mention grandmothers dressed as turtles). This passage is designed to convey a threatening image in order that we might unify behind his alternative vision.

According to Byers, the appropriate response is to “to do far more to make the case for free trade so that our people can realise the opportunities and benefits that globalisation has to offer.”<sup>54</sup> This is because, “free trade” and therefore globalisation, “causes and boosts economic growth. It is about greater competition, which weakens the power of vested interests. It provides greater opportunities and improved standards of living for the millions rather than provide privileges for a few.”<sup>55</sup>

Thus Byers holds to the traditional line that globalisation, as liberalisation, causes and boosts economic growth, with the effect that it weakens (rather than reflects) the

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen Byers, ‘Globalisation and Free Trade’, London Business School, August 4<sup>th</sup> 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

power of vested interests. Addressing the House of Commons immediately following Seattle, Byers posits that; “[t]he lesson and the reality is that throughout our history *in whatever country*, free trade has been a bringer of prosperity.”<sup>56</sup>

There are a number of elements to Byers response that warrant mention in this respect. Firstly, and contrary to the protesters view, Byers stresses the importance of free trade, which is considered to be universally favourable. However, and crucially, in doing so Byers nonetheless also recognises, in partial recognition of what the reformists would refer to as fair trade, that the WTO must be reformed, as it is the WTO that will increasingly function to “harness the benefits of free trade”.<sup>57</sup>

Discussing possible reforms, Byers suggests that “[w]e should make WTO documents publicly available and develop effective mechanisms to consult more widely. There should be far greater transparency over dispute settlement. We should consider establishing a better mechanism to allow non-governmental organisations to express their views. We need to change the WTO decision-making structure...”<sup>58</sup> For Byers, perhaps surprisingly, this restructuring extends to the possibility of having “some form of parliamentary assembly to allow a greater degree of accountability”.<sup>59</sup>

In the aftermath of Seattle, and mirroring Byer’s concerns, Blair states the following:

There is no point in pretending that the events in Seattle were not a setback for the cause of global free trade. But what should our mature conclusion be, now that we have had the time to reflect on what happened? *Our conclusion should not be that open markets and free trade are wrong.* The worst thing we could do for developing countries would be to shelve the trade liberalisation agenda and sit back while trade barriers were re-erected around the globe. The right

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<sup>56</sup> Stephen Byers, Hansard, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1999, p.1030. Emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.1026.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.1026.

conclusion is that we have an enormous job to do to convince the sincere and well-motivated opponents of the WTO agenda that the WTO can be, indeed is, a friend of development, and that far from impoverishing the world's poorer countries, *trade liberalisation is the only route to the kind of economic growth needed* to bring their prosperity closer to that of the major developed economies.<sup>60</sup>

Two things are particularly notable about the above passage. The first is recognition of the significance of the WTO, and the need to highlight how it is in fact a friend of development. The second is the fact that Blair concentrates on liberalisation as the path to development. Blair ignores the issue of equity and redistribution, the likely difficulties of ever liberalising certain agricultural markets, or the problems associated with overcoming the difficulties of declining terms of trade.

Clare Short, frustrated by the direction that she felt counter debates relating to globalisation and development were taking at Seattle, also initially considered the protagonists as being 'misguided white middle-class activists'. According to Short, "[i]t would have been truly terrible if the noises from Seattle with their largely muddle headed determination to 'save the developing world from development' were to outweigh the voices of developing countries themselves".<sup>61</sup> In order to secure development, globalisation must not be resisted:

If we are to secure this prize, we must challenge the siren voice of the protesters of Seattle and Prague. Many of them mean well, but the dominant voice is anti-developmental and calls for protectionism and the tearing down of international institutions. The last time those views prevailed was the 1930s, and we know where that led.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tony Blair, 'Managing Change: A National and International Agenda of Reform', speech to the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2000. Emphasis added.

<sup>61</sup> Clare Short, 'Advancing the World Trade Debate: Beyond Seattle', op.cit.

<sup>62</sup> Clare Short, 'Making Globalisation Work for the Poor: The European Union's Contribution', speech to the Maison de l'Europe, Brussels, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001.

As should be clear from the analysis in the variety of movements and positions contained under the misnomer ‘anti-globalisation’, Short’s position is untenable. Along with Byers and Blair, the strategy avoids recognising the inherent variations in these groups thus avoiding the sophistication and soundness of many of the protesters arguments. In so doing it is possible to interpret the ideological strategy of *expurgation*, whereby the entire challenge is dismissively subsumed under a particular (and unjustified) pejorative category. Presented as if a potential threat, the approach is to stick to the original significance of globalisation.

The central strategy in this type of argument derives from the ability of New Labour to present the protesters under the category ‘anti-globalisation’. In this respect, it is in the interests of New Labour to perpetuate this myth because it allows for a negative and dismissive approach to then be taken to the content of the protester’s claims. In being collectively tarred with the same brush, they take on the character of conservative ‘reactionaries’, anti-liberals, anarchists and anti-capitalists. To listen to them would by implication mean courting a view that would lead to a return to the ‘1930s’. Their cause can, as a result, be portrayed as ‘spurious’, muddle headed, irrational, and regressive. Thus, by erasing the plurality and complexity of these movements, the valid concerns contained and silenced under this banner can be more easily dismissed.

The extent to which this strategy wins over therefore plays a part in determining the subsequent significance and forms that ‘globalisation’ takes. Domestically, it holds out the possibility of the perpetuation of a particular set of processes the reformists dub corporate globalisation. But it also potentially determines the future orientation

for New Labour, in this case allowing for the continuation of claims to be able to articulate a third way in both the international and domestic realm. Should the strategy succeed, then this understanding of globalisation will continue to be the determining factor in explaining the Third Way. ‘Globalisation’ will continue to be a process that demands a particular kind of response, one whose status (because pragmatic) is emptied of ‘ideological’ content. Thus it will continue to play a role in entrenching the party in power.

However, it is unlikely that this initial reaction to the protest movements’ arguments was anything other than temporary. Rather, judging by the subsequent response of key New Labour members, and given the robustness of many of the reformist’s arguments (not to mention the publicity that they have generated), the strategy of expurgation (dismissal) has been replaced.

This is reflected in an alternative approach being taken. As Gordon Brown comments:

while thirty years ago, twenty years ago, perhaps even ten years ago, the disagreement between pro- and anti-globalisation campaigners would have been so fundamental that no meeting of minds would have been possible, today many people who are wrongly labelled ‘anti-globalisation campaigners’ – and who rightly campaign for trade on fair terms for developing countries – would also acknowledge: the importance of markets; the pivotal role of private capital... making global development work in the interests of the excluded.<sup>63</sup>

Brown makes this statement whilst nonetheless stating the following:

Some critics say the issue is whether we should have globalisation or not. In fact, the issue is whether we manage globalisation well or badly, fairly or unfairly. And we have a choice. Globalisation can be for the people or against the people. Just as in any national economy economic integration can bring stability or instability, prosperity or stagnation, the inclusion of people or their exclusion, so too in the global economy. Managed badly, globalisation would

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<sup>63</sup> Gordon Brown, speech to the Federal Reserve Bank, New York, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2001.

leave whole economies and millions of people in the developing world marginalised. Managed wisely, globalisation can and will lift millions out of poverty, and become the high road to a just and inclusive global economy.<sup>64</sup>

Thus expurgation (dismissal), though possible, in view of the broad chorus of criticisms and the general soundness of the arguments, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. *Differentiation*, on the other hand, allows for a separation of the plurality of groups, and thereby offers the possibility of splintering any movement of movements (thereby if not setting them against one another, then at least silencing that which unifies them in opposition). This strategy, I argue, becomes increasingly significant.

#### *Meeting the Challenge through Dissimulation.*

It is unfair to merely deride New Labour for a strategy of outright dismissal and expurgation. As already discussed, even whilst deriding the majority at Seattle as if misguided, Byers and Short nonetheless take seriously the issue of institutional reform. Most do recognise many of the valid concerns that are often aired amongst those at least contained in the reformist category. To the extent that this is the case, the moves taken in the direction of recognising some of these positions might be said to mark a shift in policy and thus also in outlook concerning globalisation. The effect almost inevitably involves a radical change to the future function and significance of globalisation, given, as Blair has stated, globalisation operates as the 'driving force' of the Third Way.

In response to increasing equivocation on the original understanding of globalisation, a number of key themes have arisen in the discourse, promulgated most vociferously

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

by Robin Cook, Clare Short, and Gordon Brown. In contrast to a stress being laid on the appropriate way to respond, a different position has developed that tentatively advocates the need to *manage* globalisation, to exercise a degree of caution in its wake, promoting the need for responsibility, fairness, and redistribution. Whereas hitherto, ‘globalisation’ has largely been thought of in economic terms, generally synonymous with liberalisation, it now becomes something else, more to do with increased interconnectedness in all respects. It is more a condition in which action must take place, rather than a process itself.

As a result, and as recognised by the more complex formulations of globalisation, the process becomes contingent because vulnerable. This translates to mean that if it is to be perpetuated in time then it must be ‘managed’, which is significant in that managing globalisation requires a decidedly political position to first be taken; one that in this case means, if it is to benefit all (and it is assumed it can), it must be accompanied by a policy of redistribution along more equitable lines. This all represents a considerable step away from a position that stresses the possibility of a non-ideological universal and pragmatic response. No longer is it possible to assume an underlying harmony of interests whereby all are affected in roughly the same way, with development and growth coming about as a result of further liberalisation and openness.

This is recognised by Cook in one of his last speeches as foreign secretary, in which he stresses the need for a ‘consensus’ to develop on an appropriate approach to globalisation in order that all do and can benefit. In so doing, and in reaction to the events in Seattle, Cook takes on board the idea that globalisation is in some way

‘vulnerable’ (as opposed to the idea that it is like the sun rising each morning). In a departure from earlier formulations that stressed the need to respond and cope with the changes accompanying globalisation, Cook instead begins to focus increasingly on the importance of having a hand in determining the very nature that globalisation takes via a more active form of agency. According to Cook:

Globalisation...is vulnerable precisely because it is often perceived by its critics as the globalisation of investment and of trade. If we are able to defeat those critics, we can do so only by building a wider consensus that globalisation must be much more than just a global economy.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to the importance of human rights, universal values and global interests, Cook now also stresses the need for responsibility and fairness as important considerations in governing the actions of states. Cook, in effect, recognises the deleterious consequences that follow from the fact that certain states have disproportionately benefited from globalisation.<sup>66</sup> He argues that if the international community is to perpetuate the benefits of globalisation, then so it must actively intervene to ‘manage’ the process. This intervention moves away from the belief that globalisation is inherently progressive, in favour of a recognition that it is also, in its current form, potentially negative.

The politicised nature that unfolds from this logic can be witnessed in the nature of the analogy that Cook now draws. A parallel is drawn with the immediate period following World War Two, where the welfare state was constructed at the same time as a boon in levels of international trade and investment. According to Cook, during this period an implicit social compact with the people and the government was entered into, one in which free and universal education and health provisions,

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<sup>65</sup> Robin Cook, ‘The Challenge of Globalisation’, speech to the Trilateral Commission, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

pensions and unemployment benefits were all provided for. Cook now suggests that this must occur at the global level. A sort of global compact needs to be reached, and British foreign policy must reflect the concern to realise just such a state of affairs. In this Cookean formulation, globalisation is reduced to the economic – international trade and investment - with a new political global agenda needed by way of a response. Thus the domestic analogy is given profound significance for a leftist foreign policy agenda. The claim is that if economics has gone global then so must politics.<sup>67</sup>

Recognising that the benefits have hitherto been unevenly spread, Cook posits that:

Globalisation is not to blame for this unfairness, but nor will globalisation alone remove the unfairness unless we consciously adopt Global Fairness as a deliberate objective. There is much that can be done.<sup>68</sup>

In more substantive terms the policies suggested by Cook include: increasing development aid, with the funds being allocated to those most in need; reducing the level of indebtedness of developing countries; and improving the terms of trade in favour of those countries exporting from developing countries. Cook points out that:

The collapse of the Seattle talks arose in large part from the feeling among the developing countries that their priorities were not high on the agenda and that their voice was not influential in the Council Chamber. Yet, it would be a tragedy for those same developing countries if we were not to take forward a further World Trade Round. Halving trade tariffs worldwide would boost developing countries' incomes by three times the total development aid flows.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>67</sup> This is also reflected in the position of Short: "for too long the politics of globalisation have lagged behind the economics. If the economy is truly global, our politics must be global too". Clare Short, 'Globalisation: Meeting the Challenge', speech to the Fabian Society, 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1999. According to Brown, "just as in any national economy economic integration can bring stability or instability...the inclusion of people or their exclusion, so too in the global economy", speech to the Federal Reserve, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov 2001, op.cit.

<sup>68</sup> Robin Cook, 'The Challenge of Globalisation', op.cit.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Cook advocates that, “free trade for the industrialised products of the developed world must be matched by fairer access for the agricultural products, textile, and clothing of the developed world”.<sup>70</sup> He does this even though, as discussed in the previous section, such a policy would in effect worsen the terms of trade: reflecting the income inelasticity of agricultural products.<sup>71</sup> Should such a policy not be forthcoming, or further complicated by calls for minimum labour and environmental standards, so such a view will be increasingly unsustainable.<sup>72</sup> As with Byers, Cook also identifies the WTO as central in ensuring the International Development Targets.

Another important component for the development of a new consensus is the exercising of ‘global responsibility’, central to the development of which is the need for corporate good citizenship. Cook argues that a more enlightened consumer and company will be more discerning both in its treatment of employers, and in its recognition of a broader constituency of stakeholders. Thus chiming with earlier discussions of Stakeholder capitalism, an idea popular with the likes of Cook (but nonetheless quietly dismissed in 1996), a focus is laid on ideas to do with corporate social responsibility as a means of determining socially desirable outcomes.

Thus, Cook’s version can be seen as reflecting a transition in thinking beyond the position that characterises the period 1998/99. However, and following his move from the foreign office at the beginning of 2001, Cook does not build on these matters. Nonetheless, Cook is not alone. Clare Short has also developed thinking on

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>72</sup> This turns on the seemingly intractable difficulty of what constitutes a ‘barrier to trade’, for example is labelling on GM crops a ‘barrier’; do certain minimum labour rights constitute a barrier?

globalisation along these lines, and specifically in line with her department's commitment to the IDT targets. It is therefore to Short that I now turn.

For Short, writing in 1999, "globalisation - driven by technological change but unleashing as it has massive and rapid movement of capital around the world - is probably as big a historical shift as was industrialisation".<sup>73</sup> Writing with a concern for development, and having committed the government to meeting the IDT targets, Short posits, "it is wrong to see globalisation as either wholly positive or wholly negative".<sup>74</sup> Those who see it in the former light are those on the right:

To them, globalisation means nothing less than Thatcherism writ large – the application of laissez faire economics to the global economy. Minimal government, minimal regulation - a belief that market forces left entirely to their own devices will produce economic prosperity for all.<sup>75</sup>

Those on the 'conservative left' that view globalisation negatively, holding on to a belief that it should "be restricted on all points", are also wrong.<sup>76</sup> This reinforces the initial point made in reference to the strategy of fragmentation, in which Short purposely oversimplifies the case, as if discussion of globalisation has hitherto taken the form of either a new right belief in the unfettered market writ large, or a complete scepticism whereby all aspects of globalisation (presumably as understood by the former) should be resisted.<sup>77</sup>

Short unsurprisingly argues that both views are inadequate. For Short, "[t]here is no question that globalisation is generating new wealth and rising incomes. Many people

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<sup>73</sup> Short, 'Globalisation: Meeting the Challenge', op.cit.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> This mirrors the strategy adopted by Blair, keen to construct the duality of openness or closure/protectionism.

are benefiting from this process. And globalisation represents a huge opportunity to lift more people out of poverty at a much faster pace".<sup>78</sup> Thus, in agreement with Blair, judged overall, Short is unequivocal in her commitment that globalisation (liberalisation) represents an opportunity and is, as a process, a potential salvation.

Yet, though optimistic, Short nonetheless is forced to develop a more subtle analysis, stressing not only the gains to be attained from globalisation, but the imperatives that follow certain challenges associated with globalisation and development. It is in this respect that she can be viewed as slightly at odds with Blair.

Given the concerns that follow from the brief that she is given, Short is unavoidably led to conclude that globalisation has the potential to "generate massive instability".<sup>79</sup> This she believes was illustrated in the case of East Asia and Russia in 1997 and 1998. Drawing the same conclusions as the reformist position, Short points out that though globalisation delivers greater wealth, it occurs at a time when "inequalities in wealth and income are growing".<sup>80</sup> If the IDT targets are to be met, it is therefore recognised that it is necessary to "manage globalisation in a way that maximises its benefits for all; above all, in a way which reduces abject poverty through ensuring a fairer allocation of income, both within and between countries".<sup>81</sup>

The sort of measures Short has in mind were most comprehensively spelled out throughout 2000 and 2001, not only in the White Paper published by the department in the Autumn of 2000, but also in a number of key speeches on globalisation

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<sup>78</sup> Short, 'Globalisation: Meeting the Challenge', op.cit.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

delivered by Short throughout the period.<sup>82</sup> The White Paper itself makes two key policy commitments: firstly “that the UK government will work with others to manage globalisation so that poverty is systematically reduced and the international development targets are achieved”; and secondly, the government will “promote economic growth that is equitable and environmentally sustainable”.<sup>83</sup> The result of this orientation is that New Labour must confront many of the challenges put forward by the various movements, as outlined earlier.

Globalisation takes a central place in thinking about development for Short because “in a globalising world eliminating poverty is more important than ever before”.<sup>84</sup> As with Cook, Short draws attention to the fact that if globalisation is to be perpetuated, a number of issues need to be addressed. Firstly, though a prerequisite of development is seen to be economic growth, this is not a sufficient condition alone. Recognising the reformist arguments, Short acknowledges that, “evidence shows that we cannot achieve systemic and sustained poverty reduction without economic growth. But economic growth alone is not enough. We need growth and equity”.<sup>85</sup> This constitutes a shift away from Blair’s position, as an emphasis is laid on redistribution and a more interventionist stance vis-à-vis the market.

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<sup>82</sup> Department For International Development, Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor, White Paper on International Development, London, Cmnl. 5006, December 2000. In addition to those already cited, see Clare Short, ‘Making Globalisation Work for the Poor: A Role for the United Nations’, speech at the Rockefeller Foundation, New York, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2001; Clare Short, ‘Globalisation, Trade and Development in the Least Developed Countries’, speech at the Ministerial Roundtable on Trade and the Least developed Countries, London, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2001; Clare Short, ‘Shaping Globalisation to Benefit All- Better Health for the Poor and Global Public Goods’, Geneva, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2001.

<sup>83</sup> Short, ‘Globalisation Trade and Development in the Least Developed Countries’, op.cit.

<sup>84</sup> Short, ‘Making Globalisation Work for the Poor: The European Union’s Contribution’, op.cit.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

This response is quite crucial, and in a number of respects constitutes a very significant acknowledgement of many of the challenges articulated by the sceptics and given expression by the new social movements, because it challenges the assumption of an underlying natural harmony of interests associated with globalisation (reflected in the need to manage (constitute) globalisation). What is more, it questions any ‘global logic’ of further liberalisation and openness (reflected in the call for intervention and redistribution), and problematises the possibility afforded by the new context associated with globalisation for a politics that transcends ‘left’ and ‘right’ traditionally understood. However, the nature of Short’s response is not to develop any of the above implications in order to challenge the above assumptions, but rather to play down the deeper significance of this recognition, favouring instead a relatively modest set of suggestions in response to the challenge.

For Short, eliminating poverty is crucial to globalisation, and requires a degree of intervention on the part of the international community along particular lines. States must be more effective and efficient, and they must provide adequate education and health care provision for their people. However, in that eliminating poverty involves the entire international community, it is also important that “fair international rules and strong international institutions” are created.<sup>86</sup> The crux of the matter with respect to the international community is that they create “representative institutions, in which all can pursue their interests equally”.<sup>87</sup> Therefore we see that Short still assumes that all interests can be pursued equally, and that rules can reflect the concerns of all the signatories.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

This view however, seems somewhat unrealistic, and generally reflects the New Labour orientation to globalisation throughout the period. Thus, though there exists a shift of sorts, it is limited in significance given the fact that the solution arguably remains largely unrealistic (because unrealisable). Though Short, Byers and Cook are all prepared to shine a spotlight on the current set up of the World Bank and IMF, their argument continues to rest upon the unlikely possibility of significantly reconfiguring power and of making a reality of tariff reductions in the area of agriculture. Short settles for the view that the solution can be arrived at by 'capacity building'; that is by enabling those without a voice to get their position heard and better articulated.

Nevertheless, without such willingness on the part of the US to alter the IMF or World Bank, not to mention the European Union to dismantle the common agricultural policy and the US to reduce its agricultural subsidies, all talk in this respect remains just that. The result of this is that 'globalisation' potentially undermines itself so conceived by Short and Cook, and determines a return to a 1930s type situation, where greater poverty, shrinking economies and environmental problems are just as likely.

And returning to the point made at the beginning; this stance may lend itself to an interpretation of ideology. In taking this approach, Short, and New Labour, are able to make the right noises and appear to push for a changing agenda in response to the calls of the reformists, and in the process co-opt their position to the extent that it no longer constitutes a significant threat. This is nonetheless done in the full knowledge

that in fact most of the changes called for remain pipe dreams, unrealisable in the short term.

Nevertheless, this should not detract from the significance of the challenge because the arguments forwarded by the party must now be made in a changed context, one that no longer is able to evoke 'globalisation' in quite the same way, either domestically or abroad. Certainly, the idea of exporting a 'third way' internationally falters. Nevertheless, how this will play out in the future currently remains open to question.

#### Conclusion: Assessing the Function and Significance of Globalisation in light of the Challenge of the New Social Movements.

So how do we approach and answer the question of what the function, significance and limitations of globalisation are given the challenge of the new social movements?

To begin with, a number of caveats must be made. First, it is important to distinguish the plurality of the positions that fall within this category. I have argued that it is incorrect to talk of an anti-globalisation movement. Better, we should distinguish between more or less influential sets of arguments that can in fact be categorised according to a shared antipathy to a particular (perceived to be dominant) understanding of globalisation; the strong thesis. I have concentrated on a particular set of positions that fall within this category, the 'reformist position'.

This however draws attention to a problem of sorts for this reformist position, in that, to the extent that it is unified in a negative sense (all against something, rather than all

for something), then their success may also be their downfall. It is therefore important not to assume a simple linear set of conclusions as to the future significance of the reformists, and thus the future significance of globalisation in the New Labour discourse.

That said, the arguments that characterise the reformist position have been influential, not least in that they concentrate their efforts on reform rather than revolution. In rethinking the relation between globalisation and development they are led to examine how ‘globalisation’ gives rise to a particular set of outcomes, which, they suggest, and in line with the constitutive method, can be explained in terms of the way in which it is understood. And it is that that binds them closely to New Labour, because both are committed to the IDTs as an achievable goal. It also binds them closely to New Labour because both talk of globalisation as a potential panacea – though coming from very different orientations on its nature and consequences.

Thus the reformist position constitutes an important challenge. At the abstract level, and in conjunction with the second wave approaches to globalisation, it has debunked and unmasked the idea that globalisation is inevitable. In identifying agency it has forced a position that proffers managing the processes that give rise to greater interconnectedness, but along lines that stress redistribution; requiring in their turn institutional power reconfigurations. In shining this spotlight on the mechanics of the processes hitherto understood as globalisation, the reformist position fundamentally challenges the limited view of globalisation being either neutral, progressive, universally favourable, entailing a certain logic (deregulation and openness), or requiring a set of pragmatic (non-ideological) responses. Deeper still, the challenge

gives lie to the idea that it is a ‘thing-in-itself’ and thus a ‘process without a subject’, or a process that benefits all because it spreads on the basis of an underlying harmony of interests.

But perhaps the key challenge stems from the concern for development and the fact that current trends are unlikely to enable the IDTs to be met. Given the above, the possibility of demarcating a particular domestic and foreign policy, and lending it a particular status in light of globalisation, begins to falter.

Domestically, this might not prove particularly significant given New Labour’s continued (as of 2003) electoral dominance. Where this is the case, then the need to underpin their position with an approach that ‘balances’ interests, retaining the middle ground, is less problematic. However in the longer term it may well challenge the possibility of globalisation underpinning and giving a particular status to the Third Way.

In foreign policy terms the challenge of the reformist position in appropriating a new vision of globalisation is highly significant, calling into question the desirability of liberalisation. Given the unlikelihood of liberalisation occurring in the European or North American agricultural sectors, compounded by the worsening terms of trade experienced by many developing countries, plus key trends suggesting greater inequality, the reformist position will play an increasingly significant role in highlighting the difficulties in meeting the IDTs. As a result, the possibility of pursuing an agenda concerned with promoting further liberalisation abroad as a collectively desirable and largely unavoidable thing may prove increasingly difficult.

This may increasingly encroach into the possibility of articulating a moral purpose to foreign policy, returning policy to a more parochially declared set of concerns.

Up for question then is the idea of a harmony of interests residing around further liberalisation. The particular original New Labour formulation of globalisation, as ‘out-there’ presenting a similar set of challenges and responses, requiring the ‘pooling’ of sovereignty in order to regain control, is questioned. Importantly, the process is politicised, ‘left’ and ‘right’ is reintroduced on the issues of free trade and growth, as well as reintroducing ‘national interests’ as potentially being in conflict. Power and politicisation thus become increasingly unavoidable features that underpin current processes of change that New Labour can no longer avoid.

However, and finally, though representing a challenge, this does not preclude the possibility of the term being further manipulated. That is, New Labour can still actively seek to promote many of the remedial policies touched upon in the chapter, knowing that they will ultimately not be realised. Of course this may be an overly cynical position to take, but nevertheless one should not right it off as a strategy of sorts. One can still be seen to be doing the right thing, that is remain a ‘force for the good’ in the world, whilst nonetheless not jeopardising one’s traditional national interests.

What is clear however, is that ‘globalisation’ has become an increasingly politicised hot potato, whose function will, over time, change. And given the nature of the remedial measures proffered in order to maintain globalisation over the *longue duree*, it seems that that ‘third way’ will increasingly resemble a more politicised (and thus

less pragmatic) programme designed to deal with the nature of contemporary change. Centrally, this potentially suggests one of two directions: that globalisation challenges in such a way that it radicalises the Labour party – pushing it further to the left by undermining the underlying assumptions of the third way; or that globalisation is dropped, giving rise to a significant gap in making sense of the future of Labour and left thinking in the unified way in which it has currently been formulated.

## Conclusion

*“Will New Labour’s eventual construction be admired, like Norman Foster’s Reichstag modernisation in Berlin, for the radical functionality concealed within a conservative exterior; or will it be remembered like Antonio Gaudi’s fabulous cathedral in Barcelona: breathtakingly radical in appearance, but behind the entertaining façade just another monument to the forces of conservatism?”<sup>1</sup>*

I now return to address the central question of this thesis, namely: what has been the function, significance and limitations of ‘globalisation’ in the context of thinking about and understanding New Labour? In answering this question, I structure the conclusion by addressing the following questions: one, how should we understand globalisation; two, how does New Labour understand globalisation; three, is this understanding correct; and four, how do we account for and ultimately judge their understanding? Taken together this also provides one way to assess New Labour more generally. Thus, and finally, I consider whether, given the particular understanding of change, the project ought ultimately to be understood as being either a conservative façade or an intelligently discrete but nonetheless radical programme for change.

First, in addressing the issue of what ‘globalisation’ itself is, the argument presented here approached this question by first dwelling on the meta-theoretical assumptions governing my orientation; drawing attention to the possibility of a plural set of meanings that can rightfully be attached to the term.

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<sup>1</sup> Ludlum, Stephen. ‘New Labour: What’s Published is What Counts’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol.2, No.2, June 2000, p.275.

I have delineated two approaches: understanding ‘globalisation’ as either an explanatory tool, separate from, though making sense of, the empirical world ‘out there’, ultimately true (correct) or false; or alternatively, ‘globalisation’ as an idea (therefore still a tool), yet now in some way implicated in the construction of the empirical realm it seeks to understand. On this latter view, the ‘empirical’ is essentially contaminated by the ideational, with the effect that ‘truth’ is never final because always in the process of being altered as those ideas themselves change.

I have argued for the second of these positions. However in so doing, I have not dismissed the fact that the former approach has something useful to say. In one sense, they are not at odds. ‘Globalisation’ can - indeed does - in part explain the world ‘out there’. Nonetheless, we must be careful about what we mean, and what we imply, when making such a statement. I have argued against a naive positivism, whereby the reality exists separately from the ideas which function to explain this reality. There is no convenient distinction that can therefore be made between the ‘subject’, be it New Labour or ‘globalisation’ on the one hand, and the ‘object’, be it ‘globalisation’ or ‘the world out there’, on the other. Instead, the correct orientation suggests a more complex intersubjective position, thereby implying that we cannot approach ‘globalisation’ *in abstract* either as a ‘thing’ or as ‘idea’.

The conclusion drawn on this point governs the approach taken in assessing its significance. I have argued that understanding what ‘globalisation’ is, inevitably draws us into a consideration of the concrete circumstances in which the term functions. That is, we need to consider how it is understood, by whom, and in what

circumstances. In making sense of the consequences 'it' has, we need to consider why a particular understanding predominates, and is able to remain dominant over time.

This has been the argument made in chapters 2 and 3. When we talk of understanding in this respect, we are talking about 'meaning'; the meaning ascribed to events, actions, and the connections that link them. Thus when we talk about what globalisation is we enter the realm of what it *means*. What it means to people, subsequently determines praxis, thereby playing its part in the construction of a particular reality.

From chapter 2, it was also held that meaning plays itself out in the context of a field of contestation, and as a result is inextricably linked to the issue of power. Though meaning constitutes the world, understanding is neither arbitrary (vitiating the relativist argument), nor neutral - in the sense that it does not escape certain 'dominant' interests. And from this, where meaning might at one level be said to serve particular dominant interests, then so we may begin to interpret 'ideology', here understood as 'meaning in the service of power'.

But to understand something as being 'ideological' is not to talk in monolithic terms. Rather, a more nuanced approach is suggested here, where *modus operandi* are identified, and validated as such, against the backdrop of an argument that points to a particular set of interests. Directing a critique of 'globalisation' therefore entails that we set our sites far beyond the narrow focus of 'globalisation' itself. We are inevitably drawn into a consideration of the *milieu*. We are forced to examine particular agents central in the construction of any particular meaning. We are forced

to examine their arguments, and the reasoning adopted. We must in addition, consider the structural setting in which this is all played out. Combined, this encompasses the three phases of the depth hermeneutic technique.

Importantly though, we begin by considering the ‘soundness’ of the argument - by which I take to mean its factual content. Hence we ought not to dismiss the ‘positivistic’ approach to globalisation outright. In what might be understood as the ‘negative’ positivistic contribution of the globalisation literature drawn from the exegesis in chapter 3, in positing what ‘globalisation’ is not (arrived at in part from one positivist position challenging another), important insights were gleaned. In the context here, it was seen that the literature contributed to the development of the term along more complex and dialectical lines, away from the initial strong thesis seen to be so crucial in the New Labour approach itself. In doing so, important insights were arrived at concerning the nature of such imputed entities as the ‘global economy’ and the ‘global logic’ seen by some to be so ‘obvious’. Empirical judgement therefore plays an important and crucial role in this context, it effectively questions the ‘facts’ so closely and obliquely bound up with a particular understanding of globalisation.

The sceptical critique was taken as being crucial in this respect, drawing attention to the scope that remains to any government grappling with contemporary changes. The challenge drew attention to the ‘myths’ surrounding the term, and opened up the idea that ‘globalisation’ is in a sense a ‘discourse’ that erroneously lays claim to a reality that is unsupportable at the empirical level. Combined with the contributions made by more complex variants, those for example associated with Scholte and Held, we see

that the term is an essentially contested one, and to the extent that it explains anything at all, it is in a way far removed from its original populist understanding.

The argument nevertheless, moves beyond the writing associated with both the sceptics and complex writers. Recognising that ‘globalisation’ is indeed a complex concept, the point is made that considerations as to its consequences and significance cannot be conducted separately from the context in which it is articulated, or evaluated separately from a consideration of power and agency in constituting reality through processes of reification and legitimisation. And this moves us on to the second and third questions, so central to the thesis.

As part of the depth hermeneutic orientation, we are led to focus in on the arguments – the function globalisation plays – in the New Labour corpus; to ask what does globalisation explain for New Labour? In the initial examination of the function, significance and limitations of globalisation in chapter 4, I drew attention to the fact that it begins with a focus that is ‘domestic’, drawing attention to the fact that the function and significance of ‘globalisation’ changes over time. To begin, I focussed on how Tony Blair makes extensive use of the idea of globalisation over the period 1996 through to 1999 to underpin and explain a number of ideas.

First, the argument draws on a particular and voguish version of ‘globalisation’, one that closely parallels the ‘strong thesis’ examined in chapter 3. Over this period, and ontologically, ‘globalisation’ remains an essentially obscure process in the discourse, a ‘process-without-a-subject’ and a ‘thing-in-itself’; though something largely synonymous with liberalisation nonetheless. This, it was seen, allowed for the

avoidance of developing too deep an analysis on the contemporary context. That is, it enables the party to avoid having to develop a critique of the capitalist context. Rather, the significance of globalisation is ‘obviously’ profound, as are its consequences, and a particular approach to globalisation – the strong thesis – determines the nature of this response. The programme, it was seen, is presented as ‘pragmatic’, and conducted in a ‘post-ideological’ context because the policies are geared towards meeting the unavoidable necessities accompanying the globalisation process. The agenda itself, geared towards keeping the country ahead of the race, whilst nonetheless accepting the disciplines of the global economy and working firmly within the obvious parameters that this sets, leads to a focus being placed on the ‘supply-side’: flexibility and training; competitiveness and facilitation; market ‘friendly’ measures. This combines to constitute a ‘third way’; a novel political programme beyond left and right traditionally understood.

Second, Blair and New Labour ‘benefits’ from this - implying an ideological interpretation - in that this version can be connected with the overriding concern over this period to gain *and* retain power. ‘Globalisation’, plays its part in overcoming a particular set of constraints specific to the Labour party operating in the context of the UK in 1997. These constraints, by no means novel, centre on the need to capture in a more permanent fashion, the ‘middle ground’. This could be understood as ‘problematic’ however, in light of certain characteristics specific to the UK economy, and as a result of electoral preferences following the previous Conservative terms in power - which, when judged in combination with what it is to be of the left, are perhaps antithetical. Reifying ‘globalisation’, and legitimising a particular position,

all serve as invaluable aids to overcoming these apparently intractable difficulties, and thus facilitate the possibility of securing these ends.

Third, this orientation, largely successful in realising its initial aims, nonetheless generates requirements and contains anomalies, which subsequently places foreign policy as a central ‘site’. This draws attention to a further set of conclusions on ‘globalisation’ as a concept necessarily employed in a context over time. Its novelty, its obscure nature, its amenability to manipulation, its plural meanings and associations, all mean that its ‘nature’ is not entirely coherent.

To begin with, essential elements to be found in the initial understanding are adopted and translated for thinking about foreign policy. The conceptualisation of globalisation as a ‘thing-in-itself’, it was seen, allows for assumptions as to the universal predicament that it confronts all states. This similar predicament universalises the solution, and makes meaningful talk of a symbiosis of the national and global interest. A ‘harmony of interests’ resides in the approach, assuming that the unavoidable logic attending to the process favours a closer association of states, thereby precluding the idea of opposing interests developing out of the very processes of change currently made manifest in a particular form. This draws attention to the liberal assumptions that reflect the partial conflation of globalisation with ‘liberalisation’ first identified in the domestic exegesis. The closer integration accompanying globalisation is assumed to function to encourage peaceable relations and collective solutions.

But the arguments are forced to take on a particular form, one that resolves tensions inherent to the domestic ‘third way’. Globalisation underpins and drives the idea of a ‘third way’ in politics, but in order to be a realisable goal, all countries (or at least the sizeable majority) must all be singing from the same hymn sheet. Reification is, in the long term, a requisite of success, and only possible if the community of states all accept the same strictures, and adhere to the same ontology. There is then, an organic whole here. The domestic and international are not discrete realms, conveniently separate and exclusive of one another, each with their own logics, but are instead profoundly tied into one another along particular lines.

Thus two forces coincide in the second phase of arguments presented by Cook and Blair. One, the legacy of the domestic exegesis extends in a logical fashion to encompass and force on the foreign policy agenda issues unresolved at the domestic level. This in part, shapes the metaphors and the argumentative form adopted when then applied to foreign policy. But, this occurs whilst also having to sell these very ideas to the international community.

This also determines the subsequent significance of globalisation. A few examples illustrate this point. In the discourse, the argument is made that: liberalisation is not only desirable for all, but also unavoidable nonetheless; though essential that the UK remain ahead of the race, globalisation is nevertheless not a threat, but an opportunity for all states (though all cannot logically remain ahead of the race). Though benefiting from a ‘pivotal status’ as a result of the UK’s historical past, the argument is made that ‘pooling’ sovereignty is something the whole community nonetheless can benefit from, allowing all to have a say in shaping and determining the trajectory

globalisation takes. 'Globalisation' is the harbinger of a new global interest (the same as the British interest), and it creates the latent possibility of entrenching a universal set of interests, thereby clearing the way to intervene and to promulgate both commercial and human rights interests. Again, an ideological aspect permeates the argument. Here, the desire to export a 'third way' in international relations can be located, not only in terms of the requirements inherent to the domestic agenda, but also in terms of the need to articulate a moral purpose to foreign policy - whilst nonetheless not compromising traditional national interests. Through 'globalisation', the discourse is apparently able to articulate an idealist and realist position.

This also helps make sense of more recent responses to the process. These, I have suggested, reflect and respond to the evolving position on 'globalisation' – which when charted, suggest a moving away from the idea of it as a necessarily favourable, neutral (universally experienced in the same way) 'process-without-a-subject'. Each of these morphings is highly significant, and in as much as they are reflected in the speeches of New Labour, precipitate a move away from the assumptions of a deterministic approach to globalisation, in favour of recognition of the need to 'manage' it. They thereby alter the possibility for reification and legitimisation, and thus change the conditions for a future interpretation.

In response, it is in fact possible to interpret a reversion (rather than 'fourth way'), away from the idea that it is neutral or that it allows for a depoliticised pragmatic agenda, towards a more old-fashioned interventionist set of positions being read off the context. As was examined in the previous chapter, the nature of the arguments centring on 'globalisation', as expressed by so many NGOs, calls for intervention: to

redistribute in order to balance inequalities; calling for ‘fair’ not ‘free’ trade; and demanding a reconfiguration of power amongst existing international organisations. Thus, as with the original domestic arguments that animated the reformist left in the earlier part of the twentieth century, equity is once more bound up with current processes of modernisation, fixed more firmly within the spectrum of the left and right, and discussed in terms of the inequities of the unfettered market. Unsurprisingly, this then begins to infect the New Labour position.

So, as ‘globalisation’ becomes less ‘obscure’, it becomes less amenable to the sort of obvious manipulation witnessed in the early years of its usage. ‘Globalisation’, now takes on a potentially subversive direction, drawing attention to a significant limitation to the New Labour understanding. An idea originally evoked in order to underpin a political project, now demands of that project an agenda potentially contradictory to the one originally taken, and thus, holds to the possibility of losing out on the reifying and legitimising properties so expedient in the latter part of the 1990s.

This returns the argument full circle, to reflect once more, on the key features outlined in the methodological and meta-theoretical sections of the thesis. Power, context, and interests again all come to the fore. How they play out will in the end determine the future of ‘globalisation’: as a political concept evoked as *explanans*; as an idea amenable to manipulation; and as a facilitator, potentially constituting a particular reality. Perhaps most significant, is the role and position of Blair himself. As his position alters, then so will the future significance of the idea. If Blair weakens, the term is destined, if not to be dropped, then certainly to no longer play such a

central role in the discourse. But Blair isn't the only consideration. Another important factor will centre on the perceptions about what future policies are needed for a successful election, and indeed the hunger amongst the party to remain in power.

However, as argued in chapter 7, though the significance of globalisation is certainly changing, there still remains ideological possibilities for the term, not least judged in terms of the possibilities it affords for making largely unrealisable and thus empty goals concerning the future role and function of international organisations like the IMF and World Bank.

And so the ideas surrounding globalisation may retain there hold. Nevertheless, the author cannot but feel that the peculiar set of circumstances over the period 1996 to 2001 are now significantly changed. The idea, whose time had come, did indeed play a very central and significant function. But this is likely to have only been but a moment in time, and it is unlikely that the reifying and legitimising consequences will remain as long-term features of either the British or international political landscape. We may indeed live in a different world from that experienced just ten years before, but politics remains an issue dealing with conflictual relations, the outcomes of which at any one time are ultimately shaped by power.

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