

## Britain and Globalization

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*Many perspectives on globalization see it as differentiated in its effects and reception, culturally driven, either pre-modern or postmodern, best captured by globalist or sceptical perspectives, and an equalizing phenomenon. This article discusses the British experience of globalization in the light of such approaches and argues that looking at this case gives an alternative view. Six themes on globalization are explored across four areas of the British experience of globalization. It is argued that in Britain globalization is, in contrast to the approaches outlined above, differentiated but also generalizing, economically driven, modern, best understood with a mix of globalist and sceptical perspectives and structured by power, inequality, and conflict. It is also argued that the British experience of globalization is a specific one and that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, economically, culturally, and politically.*

*Muchas perspectivas sobre la globalización la perciben como diferenciada en sus efectos y recepción, guiada por la cultura, ya sea pre o postmodernista, mejormente captada por perspectivas globalistas o escépticas y como un fenómeno ecualizante. Este artículo plantea la experiencia británica de globalización a la luz de tales enfoques y sostiene que considerando este caso, ofrece otro punto de vista. Se han examinado seis temas sobre la globalización a través de cuatro áreas de experiencia británica de globalización. Se sostiene que en Gran Bretaña la globalización es, al contrario de los enfoques señalados arriba, diferenciada, pero en general, también guiada económicamente, moderna, mejormente conocida con una mezcla de perspectivas globalistas y escépticas y estructuradas bajo el poder, la desigualdad y el conflicto. También se plantea que la experiencia británica de globalización es específica y que la Gran Bretaña es un país muy globalizado y globalizador, económica, cultural y políticamente.*

The aim of this article is to look at a number of themes about globalization and discuss them in relation to the specific case of the British experience. It aims to make the case for a certain sort of

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A Chinese version of this article's abstract is available online at: [www.informaworld.com/rglo](http://www.informaworld.com/rglo)

ISSN 1474-7731 Print/ISSN 1474-774X Online/08/030449–18 © 2008 Taylor & Francis  
DOI: 10.1080/14747730802252677

theoretical perspective in this context and to make conclusions about the British experience of globalization.

Recent literature on globalization has stressed the need to go beyond a first wave of globalization theory, which tended to make general and abstract assertions about globalization without differentiating forms of it and its different impacts in different locations. There have also been moves to recognize globalization as being as much culturally as economically driven and as being a phenomenon of long-term historical processes or alternatively as a very recent thing of the post-war or post-1960s period. Some debates about globalization have become separated between globalist and sceptical perspectives and some commentators have tended to take a benign view of globalization as an equalizing process or hybrid rather than just dominated by power or Western imperialism.

This article addresses these themes in relation to the British case and comes to a number of conclusions, which, as far as Britain is concerned, diverge from what the approaches above say. In doing so it also suggests that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, economically, politically, and culturally, both historically and in the contemporary period. By this I mean that Britain has been both an exporter of globalizing structures and processes around the world and also a very open recipient of globalization.

I will start by introducing the six key themes this article is concerned with, followed then by some other brief introductory comments. Firstly, it is true that globalization needs to be understood in terms of the differentiated way it operates at different levels: for instance, there being economic, political, and cultural forms of globalization which may not always operate to the same extent or with the same intensity as each other. They may also take different forms in different locations, what has some times been seen as the localization of globalization or 'glocalization' (Hay & Marsh, 2000). In terms of national differences, this phenomenon is sometimes known as path dependency or exceptionalism. This article will show, in line with this differentiating approach, how the British case is quite specific. Globalization takes a different form in the UK compared to other cases.

However while the British case shows that it is important to recognize differentiation in globalization I will argue that it is important not to let this crowd out understandings of ways in which globalization can still be quite generalizing in some forms. The British experience shows how there can be forms of globalization that are applied in many different places and difficult to resist. We will see how Britain has been at the centre of economically and politically generalizing forms, such as neoliberalism and imperialism, and a receiver of generalizing cultural globalization from the USA. In fact differentiation and generalization go together in the British case because what differentiates the UK is the specific ways it has been at the intersection of the generalization of globalization, both as an exporter and importer of it. This case shows how both differentiation and generalization apply to globalization and that an attempt to favour one of these emphases against the other cannot work.

Secondly, the article also argues that if you look at the British case you can see forms of globalization that are very economically led, even if not reducible to this. It is important to recognize that forms of consciousness and culture often provide an impetus behind globalization (Scholte, 2005, ch. 4 provides a recent summary of cultural explanations) as do political objectives. At the same time, this article argues that British experiences of globalization show the continuing importance of understandings of globalization as driven by economic imperatives and ambitions, for instance in British imperialism or globalizing Anglo-Saxon capitalism, and sometimes it is in these that other forms such as politics and culture are embedded. For instance, states

may promote globalization that arises for economic reasons, and culture may spread because there is a market for it.

Thirdly, a number of important analysts of globalization have put an emphasis on globalization as primarily a phenomenon of the post-war or post-1960s/70s period (e.g. Scholte, 2005). At the same time there have been some histories of transnational trade, religions, and migrations that show these occurring well before anything that could be described as industrialism or modernity (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1989; Frank & Gills, 1993). This article argues that if you look at Britain you see globalization there as something that is primarily modern in its foundations and based in the technology and economic relations of industrial capitalist processes and the politics of the modern nation state. The British experience raises some questions about the extent to which globalization, if it is to be seen as operating at a global (rather than regional or continental) extent across economic, political and cultural levels, and with enduring interdependent relations, can be seen in this instance as primarily pre-modern or alternatively as originating in postmodern developments.

Fourthly, situating the British experience of globalization in this modern industrial capitalist period highlights that it needs to be conceptualized historically, as an older phenomenon and not just a recent thing, but also in the sense that recent features of British globalization go back to origins in these earlier British experiences. Contemporary globalization has historical origins in earlier forms of globalization and, as we shall see, empire continues to affect British politics and culture long after its demise.

Fifthly, the British experience also shows how strictly globalist or sceptical perspectives cannot really explain processes of globalization in this case. (Writers like Held et al. (1999) and Holton (2005) separate globalization writing between globalists and sceptics, often putting themselves in a third transformationalist or post-sceptic camp). Some of the institutions involved in the promotion of British globalization are, as sceptics point out, not global—the nation state's role in British imperialism, the international economy, and transnational politics, for example. But it would be equally mistaken to see the British experience of globalization as one that merely leaves non-global institutions as they always have been. British culture and the British state have been changed by the way they have been inserted into international processes that they have promoted, for instance, global trade, imperialism, European integration, or postcolonial immigration. (The three globalist, sceptical, and transformationalist perspectives on globalization and the relationships between them are discussed more fully in Martell (2007)).

Sixthly, from some perspectives globalization is an equalizing process and one that brings greater integration and hybridity into the world, increasingly in place of inequality, conflict, and Western domination (see Wolf (2004) on why globalization can reduce global poverty and Nederveen Pieterse's (2004) argument for hybrid as opposed to Western imperialist views of global culture). But I will argue that looking at the British case brings back into the picture the significance of power, inequality, and conflict involved in processes of globalization. For example, we shall see that imperialism and asymmetries in production of and access to global culture show this.

In short, the British experience of globalization brings in some key themes: that globalization should be seen as generalizing as well as differentiating; that the economic determination of globalization is important; that globalization has roots, in the British case and perhaps also others, in modernity rather than primarily in pre-modernity or in what might be called more postmodern developments; that globalization has to be understood historically; that strictly globalist and sceptical perspectives cannot either really explain the British experience of globalization; and that globalization is subjected to structures of power, inequality and conflict.

The British experience of globalization brings out a further related theme that I will highlight in this article—that Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country, both an importer and exporter of globalizing structures and processes. As we shall see, this is evident in the British Empire, the openness of the British economy, British global political involvements, and the UK's openness to global cultures.

Put together, the themes pursued in this article show that the British experience cannot be tested through single forms of criteria. I am highlighting some perspectives over others, modernist and materialist over pre- or post-modern and culturalist for instance, but also there are a number of factors being used here, demonstrating that globalization is something that has to be measured through multiple criteria. Sometimes contrasting criteria coexist. For instance, Britain's specific experience shows globalization to sometimes take an imperialistic or generalizing form but also that it is experienced in a differentiated way in different places, the UK in this instance having its own distinctive experience.

This article is not intended as a comprehensive review of the literature on Britain and globalization. This is too large a field to be adequately covered in a piece of this length. It is intended more as a review of some theoretical themes in relation to the British experience, although again a comprehensive review of all such possible themes cannot be covered in one article. Developing a comparative approach will require a further article or book—the focus at present here is on the UK but inevitably some comparative points are made along the way. The theoretical framework here is one that looks at the limits of postmodern and cultural perspectives on globalization, and attempts to bring out the extent to which more materialist perspectives which highlight economic and state power, inequality and modernity might be illuminating in this specific case, while remaining sensitive to other theoretical themes such as differentiation in globalization and multiple criteria for explaining it.

Globalization is defined here as involving the declining significance of territorial borders in inhibiting the spread of interacting and interdependent global forms of economy, politics, and culture. It involves the diffusion of economy, politics, and culture from localized bases to a more global extent. It requires interdependent relations rather than just the movement of, say, people, ideas, or money from one place to another. The latter alone involves global movements without necessarily global relations and interdependence becoming established. Globalization needs to include some sort of regularity and durability in structures rather than just isolated or transient occurrences (see also Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005). It should be noted also that globalization is often a process rather than something achieved and that it is reversible and negotiable rather than predetermined (see Hopper, 2006). Defining globalization is important for the conclusions that are reached. For instance, we shall see that defined as above, rather than as less worldwide, globalization can be seen as something that was not as established in the pre-modern period (where genuinely transnational links were, however, less worldwide in extent) as in modern times, a period when the British were a dominant power.

I use the word 'Britain' in this article in the way it is often colloquially used, to refer to the United Kingdom (UK). In fact Great Britain is composed of England, Scotland, and Wales while the UK includes also Northern Ireland. Like all nation states the UK is a complex place. It is composed of four nations, and is also a multicultural entity. Often when commentators talk of Britain what they say applies more to England, the dominant country in the UK. In this article I will be referring to the four nations of the UK but with a consciousness that such an entity is complex and constructed. In fact some of the points I want to make are about the links between Britain's cultural hybridity and its experience of globalization and about the differentiated way the four nations of the UK respond to globalization. I will argue later in the

article that the nature and character of globalization in Britain is made more complex by the various forms of identity in its regional parts, something that shows that differentiation is a form that globalization takes alongside its generalization.

This article will look at the six themes on globalization outlined above in relation to Britain, looking first at its imperial history, then economic globalization, then global politics, and finally at culture and globalization in the UK. In each section I will focus on the relevance of the six themes.

### **Empire and Globalization**

Britain as an imperial power laid the basis for an early form of globalization of economy and politics and, to some extent, culture. Britain had a global empire that spread across the Americas, Asia, Australasia, and Africa (and Europe too when you include Ireland). In the 1920s and 1930s it encompassed one fifth of the world's population and one quarter of the world's landmass, and this does not include colonies like those in North America, which were by this time independent (Cain & Hopkins, 2001). Its scale was unparalleled in modern times, and more globally spread than the empires of Spain and Portugal which were more internationally restricted in scope, focused strongly, if not solely, on South America. French imperialism could be found widely in Africa and Asia but did not spread as widely as the British. Other competitor imperialists did not equal the global spread of these imperial nations. The longevity of the British Empire was matched only by the empires of Spain and Portugal (Hopkins, 1999) and Britain was the primary global power until the early or mid-twentieth century when this mantle passed over to the USA.

In terms of the spread of economic and political relations, and the technological bases for global communications and transportation, the British Empire was as close as it was possible to get to globalization in its period. It established global relations in seeking out raw materials and new products, production and markets, and established political forms and military power internationally to back up British influence and control. Forms of international communication and transport to underpin economic expansionism and political authority were laid down and used, for instance naval power and navigation and underwater cable systems that freed global communication from being confined to land and transportation systems (e.g. Held et al., 1999, ch. 7). (An accessible introduction to British imperialism is Porter (1996). See also Cain and Hopkins (2001)).

O'Brien (2003) has argued that the British power in the period of its empire should be seen in terms of primacy rather than as hegemonic as in the case of the US in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Britain, he says, did not achieve the degree of domination through force and consent that the US has achieved. But in terms of global extent—the focus here—its empire shows Britain as historically a strong exporter of globalization and open to being globalized itself and relates also to the other themes laid out at the start of this article.

The empire was primarily an economic one, backed up, where necessary, by military power, the state, and ideology but driven by motivations centred on commerce and trade. There are debates about whether the economics of empire were more about investment or trade or the expansion of commercial or industrial capital (e.g. Barratt Brown, 1988, 1989; Ingham 1988). But the historian of British imperialism, Bernard Porter, by no means a Marxist, argues: 'No one any more seriously doubts that capitalist pressures were the primary reason for Britain's imperial expansion in the nineteenth century' (Porter, 1996, p. xv). Colonies provided raw materials and imports, produce which could be exported, cheap labour, markets for

manufactures, and overseas opportunities for financiers. Imperialism was a basis for mobilizing global resources for Britain and for British economic expansionism.

The expansion of the empire was not primarily culturally driven. This does not mean that there were not deliberate attempts to spread British or European culture through, for instance, missionaries promoting Christianity, the establishment of imperial education networks or attempts to socialize local elites. But the idea that the British were trying to civilize the world can be exaggerated (see Colley (2005), who argues that British and US imperialism have been motivated by a desire to spread cultural improvement). The most extensive spread of economic, political, and cultural networks was created by the British trying to maintain global trading and economic interests and was much less involved with the cultural transformation of colonies except where that was necessary to protect their economic interests, and even then cultural socialization affected elites more than ordinary people. The capacity to ideologically incorporate colonial populations was limited by local resistance, the problem of establishing ideological penetration on such a broad scale, and the realization that toleration of local diversities was necessary for taxation, trade, and order to be maintained (Hopkins, 1999, p. 205).

Hobson (1902) is one who argues that imperialism was not about civilizing locals but that civilizing claims were a justification for exploiting them as tools and their land for raw materials and a method for legitimizing imperialism (see also Hopkins, 1999, p. 205). In cases like India and China, he argues, cultures were in fact just as sophisticated as those coming from the imperialist West. Empire was more about economy than exporting culture. For Hobson, economic motivations for empire were promulgated by financiers more than other sorts of capitalists, they were not the only motives or factors, and the economic motives of capitalists were not always accompanied by net economic benefits for the nation, because of the costs of maintaining empire—but none of these qualifications takes away the importance of economics as an original key motivating force (see also Townshend, 1990; Magnusson, 1994).

A test of the case for an economic perspective can be made by focusing on one of the critics of economism. D. K. Fieldhouse (1973) attempts to provide a counter-argument to economically reductionist explanations of British imperialism, Marxism being especially his target. Fieldhouse argues that there are Eurocentric explanations for imperialism which are either economic or non-economic and that there also less Eurocentric explanations. He tries to make the case for the non-economic arguments and for those which are less Eurocentric. The non-economic causes of imperialism he suggests are more political ones to do with imperialist action to maintain political authority abroad, power, prestige, and security or nationalistic jingoistic attitudes at home. There is a non-Eurocentric angle to this because he says that such attempts at imperialism were often responses to problems in peripheries that required greater intervention as much as imperatives originating from the imperial country. However, despite his advice, on such bases, against economic arguments, Fieldhouse's case, a prominent alternative to economic explanations, in actuality adds to or balances economic explanations or adds greater layers of complexity to them, rather than undermining them. He explicitly states that many of the political and peripheral issues that led to extensions of imperialism arose on the base of originally economic expansions based on trade. It was where imperial powers already had such economic interests that other not directly economic reasons for further intervention were based. Fieldhouse sums up this position himself:

Economic factors were present and in varying degrees influential in almost every situation outside Europe which led ultimately to formal empire; and the specific value of many of these territories to Europeans lay in trade, investment opportunities or other forms of economic activity...the vital link between economics and formal empire was...the secondary consequence of problems

created on the periphery by economic and other European enterprises for which there was no economic solution. . . the original economic issue had to some degree become 'politicized' and therefore required an imperial solution. (1973, pp. 475–476)

In short an attempt to provide a corrective to Eurocentric and economic explanations by rightly emphasizing peripheries and political factors makes clear that European economic objectives underlay such non-European and non-economic actions (see also Burroughs, 1998; Howe, 1998).

I will move on now to others of the six themes on globalization as they relate to Britain's imperial past. Establishing political authority and imposing military power were central to advancing the economic expansionism that made empire. So contrary to strong globalism the state was part of globalization as much as undermined by it. Yet contrary to strong scepticism, state action played a part in transforming the world to one more characterized by global relations. It was a driving force in globalization but in being so helped to create imperial links and powers which are more transnational and less centred on nation-state power and which, as we shall see, have ongoing legacies in terms of British integration into processes of globalization.

The state and capitalist expansionism which were central to the British Empire are institutions and processes of the modern era. Their central involvement in the spread of the British Empire shows this instance of globalization to be primarily a modern one. In relation to the historical theme set out earlier, empire shows globalization as situated historically in the modern era, rather than being something of the post-1960s. It was in those days that extensive global relations were established, especially economic and political.

Developments in globalization in the 1960s and 1970s in the international economy, international politics, or cultural hybridity, intensified by new information technologies, may show the revival of global interactions after reversals of globalization in the inter-war period. But in relation to earlier periods such as that of British imperialism they show a quantitative intensification or rejuvenation in forms of economic and political globalization and global encounters of people and ideas rather than the first onset of such developments. The globalization of the capitalist economy, political rule over global extents, encounters of people and ideas globally, together with industrial technologies that allowed these to happen, were well underway earlier in the British imperial days.

Studies by authors such as Abu-Lughod (1989) and Frank and Gills (1993) (see also Hopkins, 2002; Gills & Thompson, 2005) show that transnational trade, culture and innovation preceded the globalization created by Western capitalism and European imperialism. Such studies provide an important corrective to Eurocentrism, showing that transnational forms, in terms of trade, religion, and the spread of ideas and inventions from the East, pre-existed those established by Western powers. They also show that what made the West in its capitalist and imperialist days owes a lot to what was taken from the East to the extent that ideas of East–West distinctiveness become problematic (see also Hobson (2004) on the same theme).

But historians like Osterhammel and Petersson (2005) argue that while globalization started before the post-war period, in the modern era, it did not fully develop as early as pre-modern and pre-industrial times when transnational forms crossed continents but not to a global or regularized extent. Pre-modern histories talk mainly of Asian and European (with some involvement of the Middle East and parts of North Africa) rather than global trade links (which would, for instance, have to encompass also the Americas). There were not yet the state and industrial forms to sustain global interdependence and integration of a more regular and stabilized sort

in areas such as transportation, communication, migration, and commerce. For writers like Osterhammel and Petersson, more developed forms of globalization in these areas were in the modern era because of industrial technology and imperialist politics which Britain was, for good or ill, at the centre of British globalization established more developed and extensive political, military, communications, and transportation forms of globalization, partly because of what the industrial capacity of this era made possible, and, in imperial networks, also greater regularization and interdependency in global processes.

Furthermore globalization today is based in nation-state political forms, capitalist economic relations, industrial technology, modern communications and transportation, and colonial legacies of the sort established in the modern period more than in pre-modern forms of trade, religion, and migration, although the latter were significant in the past and in feeding into modern forms. So, globalization became most established in the modern period (influenced by pre-modern forms); and also globalization today is embedded in these modern forms. (These historical issues are drawn out more fully in Martell (forthcoming 2009)).

Globalization is historical not only in the sense that its early days were in a past rather than contemporary phase but also in that current global forms have developed from historical antecedents. Contemporary globalization is shaped by history. Immigration from former colonies has changed the cultural shape and political agenda in Britain. Britain continues to aspire to a global role in politics, and has a more problematical relationship with a regional European political role in a way which may be linked to the global role of the nation's imperial past. And some argue that national identities within the British Isles, of the English and other constituent nations of the UK, are affected by roots in the imperial past. I will return to these points shortly.

Needless to say, global imperialism does not happen without the exercise of power, conflict, and inequality, to support another of the themes on globalization. Some of the more free trade friendly globalization literature sees globalization as an equalizing force. There is also a cultural literature that reacts against ideas of globalization as Western imperialism by saying that the picture is a more mixed and hybrid one. But under British imperial globalization domination was maintained by force or the threat of it, and the input into empire was far from an evenly mixed and hybrid one that went beyond imperial domination. The British were a powerful imperial and military force maintaining their hold in many areas of the world despite resistance or potential resistance and in a situation of inequality with subject powers, not to mention in some tension with competitor imperialists. British imperialism involved domination and exploitation and power was established, maintained and relinquished often in situations of conflict.

To sum up so far, Britain was an exporter and importer of globalization historically in its imperial days and the experience of empire backs up the themes of this article: that globalization is often economic in its bases; that it cannot be captured easily by either globalist or sceptical perspectives; that it mainly developed in the modern period; that it is historical rather than a novel development of the post-war or post-1960s periods; and that it involves the exercise of power, inequality, and conflict as much as equalization.

And a nation's experience of globalization is different. Britain's experience of globalizing processes is a unique one not replicated by any other nation. Empire is a mode through which Britain has been an importer and exporter of globalization in the past. There have been other imperialists with similar experiences but none have been so to the same extent, in the same places, with colonialism exercised in quite the same ways, with the same combinations and substance of historical legacies. All countries are unique of course, not just the UK. The point here is that globalization is experienced differentially and the British experience is one case that demonstrates this fact.



Nevertheless, globalization has generalizing as well as differentiating tendencies. While the British imperial experience was unique, it also rolled out global forms to other parts of the world in a generalizing way. And more contemporary forms of globalization also show the generalization of globalization as well as differentiated experiences of it. Economic globalization is one area where this is felt most strongly.

### **Economic Globalization**

Industrialization is a globalizing form that originated in the mid-eighteenth century in Britain, a nation already at that time quite globalized through foreign trade and colonial connections. In part British industrialization was an attempt to compete globally with rivals in areas such as textiles. From such origins industrialization has spread through creative adaptation, affecting areas of life throughout societies where it has been introduced. It has also provided bases for further globalization through developments such as steamships, which facilitated global transportation, and industrialized arms production, which allowed for imperial domination. Britain has not only been an initiator of globalizing industrialization but also a globalizer of free trade. In the mid-nineteenth century it pursued global free trade, often, as contrary as this sounds, imposed by force (Osterhammel & Petersson 2005, ch. 4). As we shall see shortly the UK continues to be associated, relatively speaking, with a free trade version of capitalism.

Hirst and Thompson (2000) show empirically how the UK has continued to be an economically very globalized country, a special case more so than others in the G7. Britain has historically and recently been very open to international trade and capital flows. This has been punctuated by reversals and was more extended in the early twentieth century than in the post-war era that some see as the main period of economic globalization, but still significant in the current period nevertheless and fostered by policies of globalization followed by Conservative and New Labour governments from the 1970s onwards. The data used by Hirst and Thompson show that the UK is very open to FDI flows both as an exporter and the recipient of inward flows and is highly exposed to the international financial system. Banks, pension funds, and investment houses invest a greater proportion of domestic capital abroad, often in risky ventures, than in the case of other G7 countries, so making the economy, welfare, and households vulnerable to external shocks. Such measures show how the UK economy is considerably more internationalized than other G7 economies. In terms of inward investment it is more akin to some Newly Industrialized Countries and more penetrated than the main Latin American economies in this respect. In terms of reliance on overseas trade and foreign investment the UK is more like smaller highly internationalized European economies such as Belgium or the Netherlands than other G7 economies.

For Hirst and Thompson, the effect is that the domestic economy is hollowed out, a great deal of investment abroad, the British manufacturing sector dominated by foreign-owned firms and investment from overseas, without much of a domestic productive base to fall back on and vulnerable to externally initiated shocks and overseas economic circumstances and decisions. British government policies in the last 30 years or so have tended to promote this economic internationalism without the sort of public policies and welfare provision that could foster domestic firms and cushion individuals against volatility. (There is not space to repeat here details of the data referred to by Hirst and Thompson but it can be found in their article).

So the UK appears to be continuing from the imperial days as highly and distinctively globalized economically. As in its earlier free trade days, it is also closely associated with a neoliberal type of capitalism that is often identified with contemporary globalization.

'Anglo-Saxon' capitalism is linked with countries like the USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand and contrasted with more statist or collectivist economies like Germany's and Japan's (see Albert, 1993; Hutton, 1995). For many globalization *is* neoliberalism and countries like Japan and Germany who were seen by some in the 1980s as successes to be studied have been perceived from the 1990s onwards to be in need of liberalization in a more Anglo-Saxon direction (see almost any issue of *The Economist* magazine for this view). It is global neoliberalism or the 'Washington Consensus', backed up by state action and global organizations like the World Bank and World Trade Organization, which is seen to drive the decision-making of developed and less developed countries when trying to attract investment and making policy about things like regulation of the economy and public spending. Such decisions are subject to various conflicting forces but in many societies are especially made along neoliberal lines to make the economy more dynamic and competitive, attract foreign investment and under pressure from neoliberally inclined governments and international organizations.

Some surveys show a preponderance of egalitarian and interventionist rather than neoliberal attitudes in Britain even after many years of Thatcherism and when compared against a more collectivist country like Germany (see Kaase & Newton, 1998; Taylor Gooby, 1998). Or they show that UK respondents do not seem more favourable in principle to globalization, defined as the opening up of economies and the creation of a global market, than respondents from other EU15 states. But when asked about the economic benefits of globalization UK respondents have been seen to be more positive than those from other EU states (EC, 2003) and the least positive in Europe about government intervention (ISSP, 2001). It may be that UK citizens are no more neoliberal at an abstract level than those of other countries but in relation to more concrete questions they are—concrete rather than abstract neoliberals. Whatever the position at the level of social attitudes, British politics and business is widely associated with the more Anglo-Saxon model at the centre of globalization than the more social models of other parts of Western Europe, although this is not to say that Britain does not have its own extensive forms of social provision, more developed than, for instance, in the USA.

To sum up so far, Britain was an economic globalizer in the imperial days, an originator of globally spreading industrialization, is still a highly internationalized economy, and is associated with the Anglo-Saxon model often identified as being what globalization is all about nowadays. As such, Britain seems to be historically and currently an importer and exporter of structures and processes of globalization.

These observations about Britain link to the other themes of this article. They show how British globalization is historical and of the modern period, linked to the capitalist expansionism of empire, more intensified in some ways in the early twentieth century than later, and well developed before a postmodern period of information technology and contemporary hybrid culture arrived. They also show how much British globalization has been an economic as much as a cultural matter—involving entanglement in global economic relations in imperial and twentieth-century days and associated with a dominant form of economic globalization, Anglo-Saxon capitalism. British state power in imperial days and the state's role later in fostering ongoing integration into the international economy and promoting Anglo-Saxon capitalism, under Mrs Thatcher and New Labour for instance, does not lead to purely globalist conclusions in which nation states are diminished. At the same time, the extension of international entanglements that the highly globalized UK has got involved in and made itself vulnerable to doesn't lead to more sceptical conclusions about a world of states remaining autonomous.

Furthermore the British case economically shows the exercise of power, inequality, and conflict in globalization. Empire was imposed through power and in situations of inequality and conflict. The global economy to which Britain is very open and in which it is associated with neoliberal capitalism is one where there are big inequalities and power differences between states, with powerful corporate actors and investors disproportionately originating from the most wealthy nations. For some this means that there is not a global economy but one in which trade and investment are concentrated within blocs centred around the USA, Japan, and Europe (Hirst & Thompson, 2000). In this triad Britain is part of the economic core with a different role in globalization to members of the periphery.

Finally the experience of Britain in economic globalization is unique and different, as is the case for all nations. No other nation has this combination of the UK's imperial history, such openness for a large economy, and Anglo-Saxon economic affinities, supporting the argument that globalization is differentiated rather than an abstract and general phenomenon experienced in the same way everywhere. But the British case also shows how globalization can be generalized—with the spread of imperialist domination, Britain's high level of exposure to the international economy, and the diffusion of neoliberal capitalism of an Anglo-Saxon sort in many parts of the world.

### **Global Politics**

When it comes to transnational politics Britain has been an important but reluctant participant in the EU but more enthusiastic about global politics. By transnational politics I mean politics that goes on beyond the level of the nation and the nation state. By global I mean where this reaches a global extent. So the European Union is an example of a transnational form of politics but one which is at a regional rather than a global level. This section looks at Britain's involvements in transnational politics at such levels.

Britain has frequently shown reluctance about European integration. Between 1979 and 2004 the UK had the lowest average electoral turnout of EU members in the six European Parliament elections it was involved in. The low point was 1979 when UK turnout was 32.2% against an EU average of 63%, with the next lowest turnout being 47.8% in Denmark. The high point was 2004 when turnout reached a peak of 38.9% in the UK, still the lowest of the EU 15, with an EU wide average of 45.7% (European Parliament, 2004). Eurobarometer polls show UK citizens as the most negative among all member nations on whether the EU is seen as 'a good thing'—in 2004 38% of UK respondents saw the EU as a good thing as against an EU-wide average of 56%; in 2005 Britain came bottom of the poll with 36% against an EU average of 54% (European Commission, 2005). Britain has frequently resisted and fought over agreements at EU level, for instance opting out of the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, and it is one of the minority of the 15 countries from before enlargement that has not joined the single currency. Polls show a steady majority among the public against membership of the Euro.

Why is this? The UK is a set of islands. This has made mobility into the rest of Europe more of a task than in other continental countries, reinforcing a sense of separateness. Britain also experienced relative political stability in the twentieth century. It was not invaded, did not experience military dictatorship, revolution or a coup, and neither fascism nor communism in government. For other nations European integration has been seen as something that can help protect them from repeats of such traumas. In Britain separation from Europe was one thing that protected her from phenomena like invasions. This does not mean that this reason for detachment from Europe endures in the minds of the British today. But valuing separation may have outlived

the original rationale for it. In addition, for other countries in Europe integration is more of a minor disturbance to politics compared to their turbulent pasts while for the British, compared to their recent history of relative internal stability, it is a comparatively more significant transformation in the way politics is done. This may be one reason why it is approached with greater trepidation.

The UK occupies an ambivalent position between Europe and the USA. Britain was a colonial power in America and relied heavily on the alliance with the USA in the 1940s. It shares a language with the Americans which it does with no European country except Ireland. While nations like France and Germany are historically associated with more collectivist or statist versions of capitalism, the UK shares with the USA an affinity with a more neoliberal form of capitalism. Certainly, there is a history of socialism in the UK, a welfare state that is more European than American and neoliberalism in the UK has arisen through conflict and not in a natural evolutionary process. Also, post-communist Central and Eastern European states have shown an enthusiasm for more free markets, and privatization and economic liberalism is not exactly absent from Western Europe. But Britain also shares a liberal economic culture with the US more enthusiastically than some other Northern and Western European states do. Shared language and shared neoliberal affinities are among the factors that have made the UK open to the penetration of American media and culture. As such, Britain is reticent to throw itself fully in with Europe because of another affiliation it historically holds, an Atlanticist one.

A 2003 Eurobarometer survey showed that when asked about US influence on globalization UK respondents were the most positive out of respondents from EU member states, although not by a very large margin. When asked for their views on the EU's influence on globalization UK respondents were the most negative (EC, 2003). In an international survey of public attitudes, respondents from Anglo-Saxon countries were more negative than others on the statement that the provision of childcare should be a government responsibility. UK respondents were closer to Europe than the USA in their responses but the least interventionist by European standards, a position which may be more generally representative of the UK's position in relation to the US and Europe (ISSP, 2001). (The relationship of British politics to Europe and America has been explored by Gamble (2003). He and Young (1997) are among those who discuss Britain's reluctance about Europe in a global context).

So political stability in a situation of relative detachment and affinities with the US may in part be explanations for Euro-caution in the UK. But while a reluctant European compared to many other EU members, Britain is, for good or ill, a state involved in global politics (see also McCormick, 2003, ch. 8). Britain has been a military intervener in the Gulf, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, in some cases with which some other European states, such as France and Germany, were in disagreement. It is a member of many of the world's leading international political organizations (a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and an important member of NATO, the G7, the OECD, the WTO, and other international organizations). It is the world's fifth largest economy and one of two powers in Europe with nuclear weapons. Both Thatcherism and Blairism have attracted global interest as political phenomena of the 1980s and 1990s. And despite its Euro-reluctance Britain is a significant European power.

One explanation for Britain's global involvements lies with her imperial past. In the European Union Britain remains at best the third most significant power, and outside the two main drivers of European integration, Germany and France. This is a comedown from an imperial past of global leadership. But as a leading member of global interventions and organizations British politicians can feel that their country is a higher ranking power at a more international level,

sometimes the second most significant participant after the USA, albeit a distant second. To be a major global actor rather than a third ranking European regional power may feel more in keeping with Britain's imperial past to its leaders who aspire to a continuing leading international status. (Cain and Hopkins (2001) also reflect on the continuation of imperial legacies after the end of empire). However, the opposition of the majority of the British public to the Iraq war suggests they do not necessarily share some politicians' desire for Britain to be playing a leading role in such global interventions.

To sum up, Britain's Euro-reluctance and involvements in global politics may be affected by factors such as its island status, Europe's turbulent history in the twentieth century, the country's imperial past, and historical links with the USA (see also Young (1997) and Reynolds (2000) on Britain's world relations in the twentieth century). They are not predetermined by such factors. Transnational political involvements are matters of political choice made also according to additional factors such as economic interest and ideology. Alternative choices are possible. But such historical influences are part of the explanation for how choices in this particular context may have come to be made.

Britain's role in European and global politics supports a number of the themes on globalization I have mentioned in this article. Its relationships in these configurations show differentiation in the experience of globalization. Most other nations in Europe are, for instance, more enthusiastic Europeans and some are less enthusiastic participants in global politics, as has been mentioned in relation to some military interventions. The specificity of Britain's political role comes in part from what is distinct about its history, such as its imperial past and the historical constitution of its European and American links. Britain's participation in regional and global politics is rooted in institutions and processes of the modern era, such as the nation state, global imperialism, and historical events of the twentieth century, rather than in more recent globalizing forces of the post-1960s such as the information revolution or cultural hybridity. Britain's imperial past conditions its reluctance to involve itself in Europe relative to its global enthusiasms. And it is through the power of the British nation state that historical imperialism was built and participation in the EU and global institutions and interventions are conducted.

Globalization is in part constructed through state action and political agency and so is not purely economically determined. But political agency is often aimed at furthering or underpinning economic expansionism and is economically mediated. The historical and contemporary role of Britain in the global sphere has followed from the global extension of capitalism. The empire was an attempt at economic expansionism, even if it cannot be reduced to that, and Britain's position now between Europe and the USA, its Atlanticism and globalizing role are connected in part to its neoliberal Anglo-Saxon form of capitalism, something that not all other European nations adopt to the same extent but that Britain does share with the USA.

The explanations I have outlined do not support either a strongly globalist or a strongly sceptical perspective. The British state is a key actor in European and global politics. So contrary to a strong globalism there is a significant role for the state. But the state also plays a role in constituting major transnational forms of politics, contrary to positions sceptical about the rise of a global politics. Needless to say there are power inequalities and conflicts in European and global politics. States have unequal amounts of power, and conflicts result among European countries and between some of them (and countries on other continents) and the USA, for instance over free trade and protectionism, whether economic and welfare models should be more social or more liberal, and over justifications for the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the USA and UK.

In short, the experience of Britain in European and global politics exemplifies the themes of this article: on differentiation; modernity; history; economy; globalism and scepticism; and power, inequality and conflict. And Britain has been politically a very globalized and globally involved country politically.

### **Culture and Globalization**

As with the economy and politics Britain is very open to the globalization of culture. Britain's cultural globalization can be seen in postcolonial inputs into its culture and its relationship to the Americanization of culture, but attitudes to globalization vary between the four countries of the UK. The latter shows the differentiation of globalization, in this case within the UK.

One area in which multicultural or hybrid dimensions to British culture have arisen has been from post-war immigration from former colonies. A focus on post-war postcolonial immigration overlooks that Britain has long been a hybrid country, through centuries of invasions and migration. However, post-war postcolonial inputs have brought further complexities to British culture through greater cultural diversity and raised political questions to do with immigration and citizenship, multiculturalism and integration, racism and inequality, and, for some, national identity. The latter, a lot of which is constructed and imagined, and complex, especially in a state which is already multinational, has become more complex with greater multiculturalism. (Castles and Miller (2003) outline global migration drawing out the implications for ethnic relations and multiculturalism).

As well as postcolonial inputs Britain is also open to Americanization of its culture (discussed more generally in Beck et al., 2003). Historically the globalization of American culture started with the mass production of Fordism and Taylorism, the mass consumption that followed (for instance in car ownership), and mass culture spreading from the USA to other parts of the world, through the proliferation of new forms of communications technology (Reynolds, 2002). American cultural exports started off with jazz, film, and rock 'n' roll (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005), and US culture has come to be prevalent in youth and pop culture, the media, such as cinema and TV, and in a consumerist and individualist economic culture similar in both the USA and UK. The two countries share a language which makes Britain especially open to American cultural imports such as TV programming (see Thompson, 1995, ch. 5 on US media exports). For Reynolds (2002) globalism helped America create a national identity, as a globalizer, in a diverse nation, in the same way that some argue, as we shall see, imperialism did for Britain.

The penetration of American culture in the UK and elsewhere can be exaggerated. Beyond more superficial consumer culture there may be differences in the customs, habits, and values of people of different nations. While countries other than the UK are open to Americanization, elsewhere in the world US culture is also sometimes less evident, resented or resisted. It can sometimes be more at the level of economy and politics than culture that American power is most extensive, through American-dominated neoliberal capitalism and its political-military strength. Globally societies are often a hybrid mix of the domestic and incoming elements from other parts of the world (see, for instance, Robins, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). Hybridization can be used to describe British culture, open to inputs not just from America and former colonies but broadly from, for instance, Asia, Africa, and Latin America when it comes to music, fashion, and food, for example. And British culture is also not just an importer. The dominance of English as a world language is one factor that facilitates the export of British culture, pop music, and media (Thompson, 1995, ch. 5).

But Britain does not have a monolithic relationship to globalization. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland show different attitudes to globalization from those in England. The smaller UK nations tend to be more friendly to Europe and less so to Atlanticism and Britain's global interventions. Anglo-American capitalism involves a culture of individualism, which is less strong in Scotland. Social attitudes data show such regional differences: for instance, Scots are more egalitarian and interventionist than people in the Midlands, London, and the South of England and more pro-European than the English, with the exception of Londoners (see Curtice, 1988, 1996; Curtice & Heath, 2000; Curtice & Seyd, 2002). Some poorer regions within the smaller UK countries have more to gain from the EU and are more inclined to bypass the UK nation state to which they have less of an allegiance than the English. So, in accordance with the differentiation theme, there are regional differences within the UK in attitudes to aspects of globalization such as the values of Anglo-American capitalism and wider political entities like Europe.

Some like Colley (1992) have argued that British imperialism involved the Welsh, Irish, and especially the Scots, as well as the English, and that it was a factor that united the four nations in a shared British identity. But it has also been argued that the Scots were involved in the empire in a subordinate role to the English and that the empire led to a stronger sense of Scottish identity than existed before (Hopkins, 1999, p. 212). The Scots, Welsh, and Irish have been as much historically colonized (by the English) as colonizers and so can sometimes be as anti-imperialist as linked to imperialism, and identify with the history of their own nations rather than with that of the British as a whole and its wider historical extension. (There are, of course, variations from this, for instance among unionists in Northern Ireland). Furthermore with the decline of empire there was not so much of a British project to identify with and this, it is argued, has led the Scots, Welsh, and Irish to fall back on their own identities, this being one factor leading to political devolution instigated by the first Blair government (Gamble, 2003).

Kumar (2003) argues that Britain's imperial past has also had implications for English identity. He suggests that English identity is more elusive than national identity for the Scots, Welsh, and Irish and most of mainland Europe because as an imperialist nation the English developed a sense of externally oriented missionary nationalism and less of an internal sense of national identity, except insofar as the latter was related to their larger external enterprises. As a result, Kumar argues, the English have more trouble identifying themselves in the post-imperial era than some other nations. For the English the loss of empire calls either for a new reassessment of identity or, as has been mentioned above in relation to European and global politics, for a continuing sense of imperial aspirations through other channels, or both.

To sum up, Britain seems, as with the economy and politics, quite a globalized country culturally, affected by, for instance, postcolonial and American inputs into its culture. But it is not homogeneous in attitudes to globalization, there being regional differences in attitudes to the values of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, Europe and, perhaps, variations in responses to post-imperialism.

These experiences of Britain in global culture support the six themes on globalization of this article. The combination of Commonwealth immigration, the mode of Americanization, and the varying experiences of the four nations differentiate Britain from other countries. Other nations share some of these inputs but Britain's combination of them is its own, just as other nations have their own unique mixtures of cultures. Differentiation in relation to globalization also occurs within the UK's different nations and cultures. But at the same time differentiation is accompanied by generalization globally, in the case of economics and politics as argued above, and culturally in the case of American culture, for instance.

History is important to Britain's cultural globalization, imperial history being behind postcolonial influences on British culture, links with the USA, and reasons given for differences in the UK's four nations' relationships to globalization. Economic drives were behind the imperial expansion, which has been influential in these ways and behind the importing and exporting of culture more recently. Culture globalizes in part because of efforts to buy and sell it, although its globalization cannot be reduced to this.

Cultural globalization is affected by power, inequality, and conflict. The importing of American culture is linked to the US dominance of the cultural industry through its large media conglomerates and there is an asymmetry in production of and access to culture (Thompson, 1995; Held et al., 1999, ch. 7), the UK being at the powerful end of things on a global scale in both aspects. The export and import of culture can lead to conflict and the UK is more receptive as far as the diffusion of American culture goes, whether this is economic and political values or US media, than some other parts of the world. A country as nearby to Britain as France, for instance, is known for government attempts to resist too much intrusion from the English language and Anglo-American pop music.

Globalist perspectives can detect the exposure of countries like the UK to the diffusion of culture across national boundaries but have sometimes tended not to recognize differences in productive power, access, and reception of media and culture, in which respects the UK is relatively open globally compared to some other places. Scepticism can recognize the importance of national differences in such regards but be less sensitive to the way these combine with the reconstruction of national cultures by the global diffusion of culture, in the way I have described as being the UK experience.

## Conclusion

I have argued that six themes for understanding globalization apply to the British experience and these contrast with other more benign postmodern and culturalist perspectives, and with those that focus on either generalizing or differentiated perspectives or either globalist or sceptical criteria. In the four areas in which I have addressed these themes we have seen that Britain is affected by its history as an imperial power, its affinities with a neoliberal mode of economic globalization, its role in regional and global politics, and its hybrid globalized culture.

- 1) In the economy, politics, and culture Britain is a very globalized and globalizing country. It has its own differentiated and unique experience of globalization, as do all nations, but has also been aligned historically and now with a generalization of economic globalization that rolls on despite areas where there is differentiation in globalization.
- 2) Britain's experience of globalization has been strongly related to economic expansionism.
- 3) Its global experience has been based in the modern era of capitalism and the nation state, more so than being pre-modern or originating in postmodern times.
- 4) It is situated in history, and history, in part, explains Britain's contemporary experience of globalization.
- 5) A strong globalist perspective captures the spread of globalization, something which Britain has been both an agent and recipient of, but less so the role of the nation state and national differentiation, also parts of the British experience of globalization. A strong scepticism shows the continuing role of the nation state but can underplay the way the state plays a role in a configuration of global forces and is reconstituted culturally



and politically by them, as Britain has been by experiences such as its past imperial role, economic globalization, regional and global politics, and cultural hybridization.

- 6) In Britain, as in other cases, these processes involve inequalities between the economically, politically, and culturally more powerful and richer on the one hand and the weaker and poorer on the other and the conflicts that result from the meetings of such unevenly divided forces. Britain has usually been part of the core of states that have the greatest power in processes of globalization, although sometimes has been part of global processes that involve other actors more powerful than itself.

These themes come together to emphasize a perspective that stresses economic, historical, modern factors, and power and inequality over postmodern, cultural views that have a more benign pluralist and equalizing view. This perspective combines in a multi-criterial way sceptical as well as globalist insights and the role of generalization in globalization as well as differentiation.

However, these circumstances behind Britain's experience of globalization do not determine it. They help to explain the choices that have been made to mould the way Britain's experience of globalization has developed. How Britain responds to globalization is in part a matter of political choice and alternative choices could be made in the future.

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