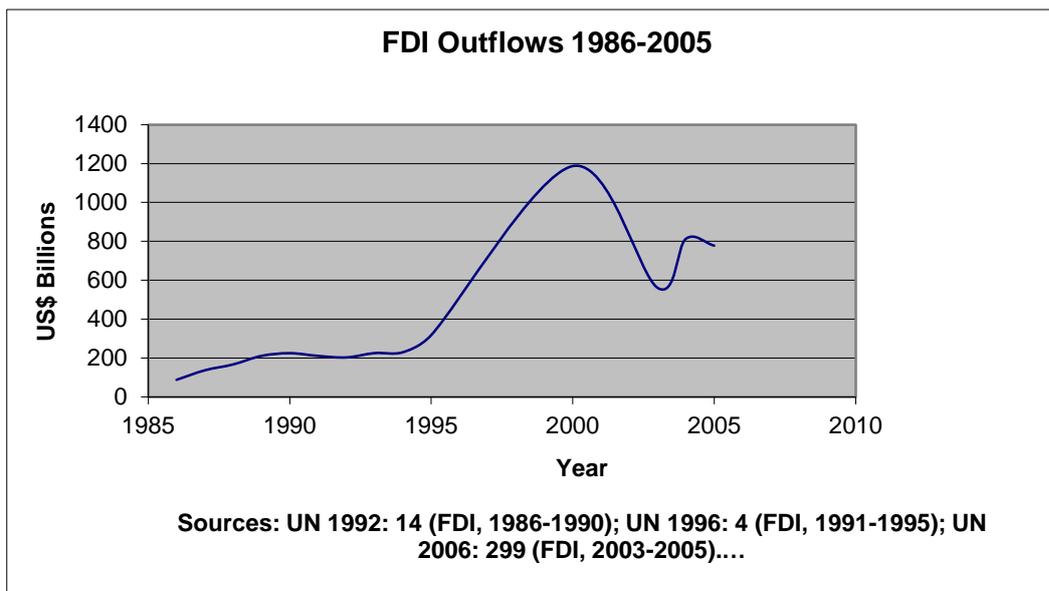


Globalisation, Trade and Resistance

Professor Andreas Bieler

Introduction

Globalisation has become an increasingly important concept in International Relations/International Political Economy (IR/IPE) and it is most frequently related to changes in the global economy from the early 1970s onwards. The way it is defined and its exact implications, however, are highly contested. Scholars generally agree that we have witnessed a drastic increase in foreign direct investment (FDI), administered by an ever larger number of transnational corporations (TNCs).



Outflows of FDI rose from US\$ 88 billion to US\$ 225 billion between 1986 and 1990, which is an annual increase of 26 per cent (UN 1992: 14). There was a downturn in FDI in 1991 and 1992, mainly due to recessions in the biggest economies, but it picked up again from 1993 onwards up to US\$ 1187 billion in 2000 as peak year (UN 2004: 372). A new period of recession was reflected in the decline of outflows of FDI three years in a row down to US\$ 561 billion in 2003, but four years of consecutive growth led to a new all-time high of FDI

outflows of US\$ 1996.5 billion in 2007 (UN, 2008: 253). Overall, there were 78817 TNCs with 794894 foreign affiliates in 2007 (UN, 2008: 212). How these increases in FDI flows can be interpreted, however, is contested. Similarly, scholars agree on the increasing dismantling of national financial market regulations and the emergence of an integrated global financial market. What this implies, however, is heavily discussed.¹ Finally, the volume of world trade has also increased significantly. ‘Between 1945 and 2007, growth in world trade consistently outstripped growth in world production. In this period, world production doubled but international trade grew more than fourfold’ (O’Brien and Williams 2013: 115).²

In this lecture, I will first outline briefly three rival interpretations of globalisation. As it will be shown, the very same empirical facts are explained and understood in different ways by (neo-) realist, liberal and neo-Gramscian/historical materialist approaches. Then I will look at the role of trade in these structural changes. While the growth in trade can be regarded as a continuation of earlier developments, the expansion of trade into the areas of intellectual property rights, services and investment from the early 1990s onwards can be understood as part of a new neo-liberal agenda of globalisation, which forces countries to restructure their economies. It is generally accepted that global structural change has resulted in overall economic growth. Ultimately, however, this new international order is increasingly criticised for being unjust due to the large inequality in the distribution of these benefits (Ortiz and Cummins 2011). Resistance to globalisation has been the consequence since the late 1990s. In the final section of this lecture, the liberal turn to the notion of global citizenship will be introduced, as will be the push towards a new mode of global governance based on an emerging global civil society.

¹ For a discussion of how this data can be interpreted, see Bieler (2006: 47-54).

² Since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008, there has been a contraction in world trade and downturn in FDI levels. With the crisis ongoing, it is not possible yet to assess whether these are only temporary changes or a longer-term tendency.

Rival understandings of globalisation and the role of the state

From a (neo-) realist perspective, academics do not deny that there have been changes since the early 1970s. Nevertheless, they assert that states continue to be the only important international actors operating in an anarchic environment and competing with each other over military and economic capabilities. Cross-border trade and financial flows have increased, but there is no fundamental structural change of the international system. Hence, it is more appropriate to speak about internationalisation instead of globalisation.

The core neo-realist assumptions are (see, e.g., Donnelly 2013):

- (1) the international system is characterised by anarchy;
 - (2) states are unitary, functionally similar actors. They are the only important actors in international politics;
 - (3) the distribution of power capabilities is the main, system-level variable to explain state behaviour.
- Hence international relations for neo-realists is the analysis of inter-state rivalry over economic and military resources.

Liberal assessments of globalisation, by contrast, argue that the changes since the early 1970s are not only a change in the magnitude of cross-border flows, but they also constitute a qualitative shift in the international structure. Most importantly, globalisation is understood to be characterised by an increasing transnational organisation of production, controlled by transnational corporations (TNCs) and reflected in the increase in FDI, and the emergence of an integrated global financial market. Overall, this has led to a clear change in the structure of the international system with a global economy emerging above the inter-state system. This has also implied the emergence of new relevant international actors including TNCs, international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations such as the World Bank. These international actors rival states over authority in the global economy (Higgott et al 2000). Finally, some liberals speak about the emergence of a global civil society (see also below), which is sometimes understood to be based on a global

culture, also referred to as McDonaldisation. Normatively, liberals generally understand globalisation to be positive in that it represents progress towards a peaceful international order through the spread of liberal democracy and free trade.

The core liberal assumptions are (see, e.g., Zacher and Matthew 1995):

- (1) there are other important international actors beyond states;
- (2) change in the international structure is possible;
- (3) co-operation as a positive-sum game is feasible.

Hence, for liberal IR theory progressive structural change beyond the anarchic inter-state system is possible in international relations.

Finally, from a neo-Gramscian, historical materialist perspective, there is agreement with liberals that globalisation expressed in the transnationalisation of production and finance constitutes a significant change in the structure of the international system. The analysis of these changes and the resulting conclusions differ, however. Starting from an analysis of the social relations of production, neo-Gramscian perspectives identify social class forces as the core actors. As a result of the transnationalisation of production, it is argued, there are not only capital and labour opposing each other, but also transnational fractions of capital and labour in addition to national class fractions of capital and labour. Globalisation is then understood as being driven by transnational capital, benefiting most from the increasing integration of national economies at the global level. Importantly, in addition to the liberal understanding of globalisation, neo-Gramscian perspectives add a shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberal economic ideology as part of the new overall structure. Neo-liberalism was initially used to criticise Keynesianism and its focus on full employment through state intervention into the economy at the ideological level during the world-wide recession of the 1970s. In the 1980s, neo-liberal economics with an emphasis on low inflation, price stability

and state withdrawal from the economy was implemented in the UK under Thatcher and the US under Reagan, before it gained a hegemonic position at the global level during the 1990s.

The core neo-Gramscian assumptions are (see, e.g., Bieler and Morton 2004a):

- (1) in order to understand structural change in international relations, an enquiry has to start with an analysis of the social relations of production;
- (2) social class forces are identified as the core collective actors through the investigation of the social relations of production;
- (3) the three forces of material capabilities, ideas and institutions interact on three inter-connected levels of activity, i.e. the social relations of production, forms of state and world order.

From a neo-Gramscian, historical materialist perspective, the main focus is on understanding structural change through a focus on class struggle within and across the social relations of production, forms of state and world order and how this is reflected in the interaction of material capabilities, ideas and institutions.

The promotion of international free trade characterised the whole post-World War Two period and, thus, affected the time prior and after the early 1970s. It is, however, this shift towards neo-liberal economics, which implied a qualitative change for international trade too. The next section of the lecture will look at this in more detail.

Think points

- In what way can one argue that rising FDI levels signify structural change in international relations?
- Does it make sense to think in terms of different class fractions when discussing developments in international relations?

Trade in times of global restructuring

The promotion of free trade was initially part of what John G. Ruggie (1982) called the post-war compromise of 'embedded liberalism'. On the one hand, countries within the Western bloc under the leadership of the USA committed themselves to increasing interdependence of

national economies. On the other, safeguards were put in place within this international system, which allowed countries to intervene into their national economies in order to ensure full employment – following here a Keynesian understanding of the economy – and, thus, domestic stability at home. Thus the compromise of ‘embedded liberalism’ represents a combination of national economic sovereignty and a stable international economy fostering openness and free trade. The liberal idea of free trade as beneficial for everybody was combined with the national right to intervene in the economy to ensure domestic stability and social order. ‘Embedded liberalism’ represented a form of multilateralism, which was compatible with domestic stability.

Keynesian economics:

The main assumption is that in order to obtain an economy characterised by growth and full employment, leading in turn to sufficient demand levels and political stability, the state has to intervene into the market in a counter-cyclical way. In times of recession, the state, for example, has to invest into the economy to create employment and engender a generally optimistic atmosphere for business, while in times of strong economic growth, the state should dampen activities so that the economy does not overheat. Possible methods of state intervention employed by developed countries in the first three decades after World War Two included:

- demand stimulation via budget deficit spending in, for example, infrastructure projects;
- currency devaluation to engender export-led growth;
- control and regulation of credit allocation;
- lower interest rates through central bank interest rate cuts;
- nationalisation of parts of the economy and the provision of special subsidies to maintain jobs;
- employment creation via public sector expansion;
- active labour market policies to facilitate the transfer of labour from declining to expanding industrial sectors;
- focus on labour-capital-government interaction to support Keynesian policies via wage moderation.

In relation to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), on the international side the expansion of trade was to be achieved through a step-by-step reduction of tariff barriers. Under the remit of GATT several successive negotiations including (1) the Dillon Round in 1960-2; (2) the Kennedy Round in 1963-7, (3) the Tokyo Round in 1973-9, and (4) the Uruguay Round in 1986-93 led to a steady lowering of tariff barriers. The overall goal was a multilateral world trade regime for the conduct of commercial policy. On the

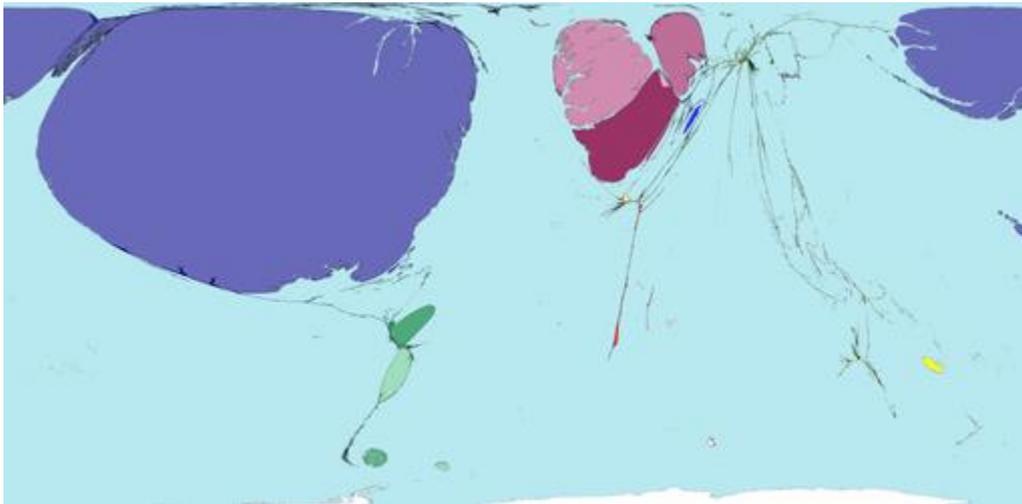
domestic side, escape provisions provided protection against policies harmful to domestic stability. For example, quantitative restrictions, in general prohibited, were allowed to protect balance of payments difficulties that resulted from domestic policies intended to ensure full employment. In contrast to the so-called Bretton Woods system of relatively fixed exchange rates, which had collapsed in the early 1970s when the USA were no longer willing to provide the dollar as the anchor currency, multilateral co-operation continued within GATT throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, continuity should not make us overlook the dramatic qualitative changes the international trade regime underwent as a result of the Uruguay Round, concluded in 1993. This included significant institutional as well as policy changes.

First, similar to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the area of international finance, an international organization with responsibility for trade was supposed to be established after World War Two. Nevertheless, this did not materialise as the US Congress denied its agreement. In 1995, however, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (<http://www.wto.org/>) was set up to oversee governance of global trade. Most importantly, perhaps, was the establishment of a supranational dispute settlement mechanism, characterised by mandatory jurisdiction, fixed timetables and automatic retaliation in case of non-compliance, combined with an appeal body able to reverse initial rulings. These arrangements of transnational governance contradict the compromise of 'embedded liberalism' in that they undermine national sovereignty (Mortensen 2006: 175).

Second, the Uruguay Round expanded the remit of GATT and then the WTO into the areas of intellectual property rights, services as well as investment. Thus, the Uruguay Round included the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) accord (http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_e.htm). This provides strong protection of the ownership of intellectual knowledge, giving companies in leading high-tech sectors a

longer position of monopoly in relation to their new technologies and some protection against the ‘piracy’ of these technological advances. At the same time, it makes it more difficult and expensive for developing countries to get hold of latest technology for their own development. The unequal control over technology and ideas is evident from the map below.

Royalties and Licence Fees Exports



Source: <http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=99>

Critics of TRIPS highlight not only its detrimental impact on development, but also problems such as providing the needy in poor countries with affordable, latest medical products. Especially the treatment of HIV infected people in Africa is a case in point here.

The services sector has become increasingly important as an area of economic growth vis-à-vis traditional manufacturing. This is especially the case in developed countries, but the services sector of developing countries too has become an interesting area often for TNCs from the North. In order to regulate this area of global trade, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (http://www.wto.org/English/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_e.htm) was integrated into the agenda of the WTO. So far, it is a very loose agreement giving states the right to identify those sectors, which are not part of the agreement. Nevertheless, there are moves to

deepen this agreement and developing countries find it often difficult, if not impossible, to resist the demands of developed countries to open up their services sector in exchange for development aid. Finally, the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) (http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trims_e.htm) focuses on measures that affect trade in goods. All investment measures that have ‘trade-restrictive and distorting effects’ are prohibited. This makes it impossible for countries, for example, to put forward local content requirements.

Arguably, these changes have dismantled the compromise of ‘embedded liberalism’ in that they undermined state sovereignty and abolished the principle of permitting states to intervene into their own economy in order to obtain full employment and achieve domestic stability. Instead, critics have argued, the new agenda of transnational dispute settlement and extension of transnational governance into the area of intellectual property rights, services and investment has to be regarded as part of the general neo-liberal hegemony at the global level, which includes international organizations such as the WTO pushing more and more countries down the road of neo-liberal restructuring.

Neo-liberal economics

The main assumption is that state intervention into the economy will always lead to sub-optimal outcomes. Employment, rather than the result of specific state policies, could only be the result of a functioning free market economy. A free market, unhindered by state intervention, it is argued, leads to higher levels of competition and, thus, efficiency. This results then in higher profits and general levels of wealth creation, which ultimately, through a trickle-down effect, benefit everybody in the form of more jobs. The state should focus on low inflation and price stability, but otherwise withdraw from the market. Concrete neo-liberal policies include:

- independence of central banks with obligation to guard price stability;
- liberalisation and deregulation of markets, including financial markets;
- the privatisation of nationalised industrial sectors;
- no subsidies for ailing industrial sectors;
- deregulation of labour markets making it easier for firms to hire and fire workers;
- cut-back of trade union rights;
- reducing welfare provisions to make work more ‘attractive’.

Unsurprisingly, these changes authored by developed countries such as the USA, the European Union as a whole, international organizations as well as agents of transnational capital have not gone unchallenged. Open unrest erupted around the 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle. The current Doha Round on further trade liberalisation, which is supposed to deepen GATS and include agriculture in the global trading regime, has been stalled for years. Especially the failure of the WTO Cancun conference in September 2003 is characteristic for the current problems. There was no agreement on a Ministerial Text, because a group of emerging economies, including Brazil, Argentina, India, South Africa and China refused to co-operate on investment, competition policy, and transparency in government procurement issues, while agriculture was not addressed satisfactorily from their point of view. The WTO Hong Kong conference in December 2005 made only minimal progress and general negotiations had broken down by July 2006. A further attempt to conclude the negotiations failed in July 2008. With multilateral free trade talks on ice, the USA and the EU have increasingly focused on negotiating bilateral free trade agreements with individual developing countries or group of countries. Importantly, these negotiations include the qualitatively expanded free trade agenda, thereby putting restructuring pressure on ‘partner’ countries. For example, the EU’s free trade strategy Global Europe, adopted in 2006, has had the explicit goal of securing new markets for European exports in services, public procurement and investment, as well as to guarantee the protection of intellectual property rights (Bieler 2013). Most recently, there has been a re-newed effort at implementing the extended free trade agenda through regional, multilateral free trade agreements, including most importantly the negotiations of a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) (see, e.g., <https://www.citizen.org/TPP>) as well as a US-EU Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) (see, e.g., <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-us-eu-transatlantic-free-trade-agreement-tafta-big-business-corporate-power-grab/5352885>). The increasing inclusion of

so-called investor-state dispute settlement provisions, which allows companies to sue states, if they feel that a policy decision undermines their profits in this country, are only one of the key dangers of these treaties, as perceived by their critics (Hilary 2013: 45-54).

As Mortensen correctly notes, ‘the hardening of WTO governance, resulting in numerous high-profile trade disputes, seems to have ignited resistance within states, among states, and beyond states. The seeds of counter-hegemonic resistance scattered in Seattle and Cancun exemplify the potential of societal resistance to unregulated, neo-liberal globalization’ (Mortensen 2006: 180). In the final section of this lecture, we will turn to these moments of contestation of neo-liberal globalisation and investigate the different ways this can be explained from within IR and IPE.

Think points

- Is the criticism of the WTO to contribute to global inequality justified?
- Does the current stalemate in the Doha negotiations round signify that the WTO is no longer able to govern international trade?

The emergence of global civil society and global citizenship in the governance of globalisation?

From a state-centric, neo-realist perspective the current conflicts can be understood as the resistance by a state or a group of states to a dominant state and its international order. Thus, we could analyse the group of countries around Brazil and India and its unwillingness to cooperate at Cancun in 2003 as an attempt of states trying to secure more economic gains through forming an alliance in resistance to the dominant order pushed by the USA. Additionally, drawing on E.H. Carr’s definition of realism, the liberal ideology around the focus on peaceful interaction between states can be unmasked as an attempt to preserve the dominant position of powerful states within the existing global neo-liberal order. The main

problem of neo-realism is, however, its inability to take into account the current transnational, non-state based movements of resistance against neo-liberal globalisation as witnessed in Seattle in 1999 or at the World Social Forums, first held in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001, where counter – neo-liberal groups from all over the world meet to discuss alternatives to the dominant order.



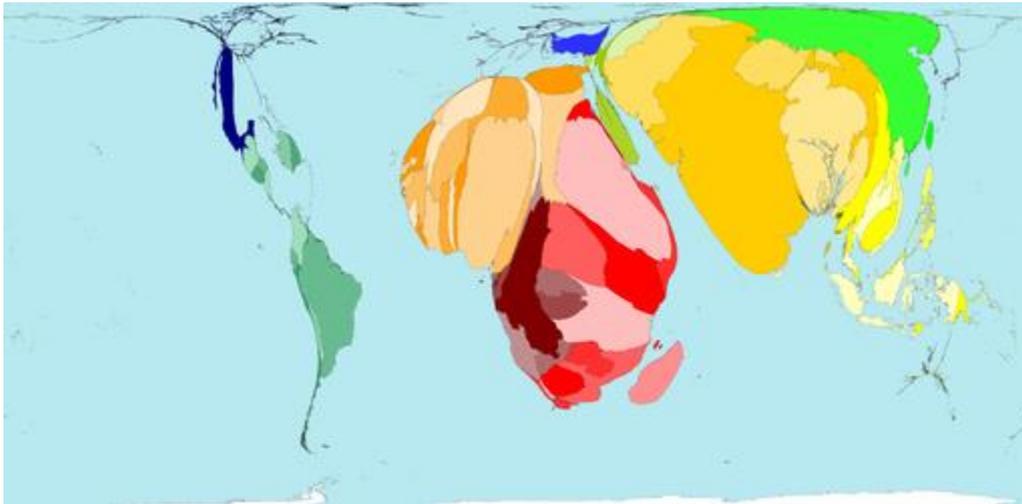
Photograph Prof. Simon Tormey

Liberal perspectives, as indicated at the beginning of the lecture, think in terms of new transnational actors as a result of structural change related to globalisation. We can identify two camps within the liberal group. First, there are the so-called ‘hyperglobalists’. They are firmly committed to neo-liberal economics and remain convinced that restructuring along these lines drives globalisation to the benefit of everybody involved. If this has not been successful yet, then this is only because countries and people have not fully complied with the requirements of the market. Ultimately, however, globalisation is expected to result in an improved condition for all around the world. The second group of liberal scholars and observers agree with the first group that the neo-liberal economics of globalisation yields higher returns. They are less optimistic, however, about the just distribution of these gains.

Alarmed by the increasing levels of inequality within countries, but especially also between developed and developing countries, they demand a new structure of global governance, which is in charge to re-distribute politically the economic gains so that it is actually guaranteed that everybody benefits. In other words, neo-liberal economics guarantees the maximum increase in world-wide wealth. However, to guarantee a more just distribution and to counter the disturbance of wealth creation by resistance movements, a system of global governance needs to regulate politically the global market (Higgott 1999).

The work by Karl Polanyi (1957: 130-77) is important for this strand of liberalism. Analysing first the establishment of free market competition in the 19th century, Polanyi then tracked the political reassertion by the community against the destructive impact of unregulated markets in the early 20th century. Hence, he outlined a double movement, in which after a period of laissez-faire, a phase of political regulation followed. Similarly, liberal scholars today argue that globalisation so far represents the first movement of the establishment of unfettered markets at the global level. Now it would be the task in a second movement to re-regulate the market, this time at the higher, international level. The goal is a just distribution of globalisation gains and the guarantee of basic human rights for all. Here, liberal approaches refer to the concept of global citizenship. It is based on the understanding that the actions of people in one area of the world affect the living conditions of people in other areas. Buying goods in one country, for example, has often got a direct impact on the working conditions of people in other countries. The demand for cheaper goods in the North can result in long working hours and low pay, sometimes even child labour, in countries in the South, where these goods are produced.

Child Labour



(<http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=135>)

To solve these problems, solutions need to be based on an increasing awareness of our mutual interdependence. Global warming, for example, is understood as a global problem, which requires a global solution based on the co-operation of people across the world. Global citizenship is then related to the rise of global civil society consisting of NGOs and new social movements. They are regarded as agents, who actively spread this understanding of global citizenship in support of the solution of global problems. They are considered to be the potential source of the second movement. We can identify several scholars, who develop arguments along this line of thinking. For example, David Held and Anthony McGrew strongly argue that political authority has to be re-established at the regional and global level to regulate globalisation. They focus on transnational social movements as a part of a movement towards a cosmopolitan social democracy and they emphasise the importance of multilateralism as well as better accountability procedures via new institutions, endowed with the task to provide global public goods (e.g. Held and McGrew 2002: 135-6).

Meanwhile Jan Aart Scholte suggests a thick reformist social democratic project at the transnational level, where public policies concentrate on equity and democracy (Scholte 2000: 285). In the second edition of his book, he goes, however, beyond the reformist

inclinations and argues for an ‘ambitious reformism’, which incorporates some transformist inspirations (2005: 389-95). Others, finally, focus on the increasing interaction between international organizations such as the WTO and global social movements with the latter attempting to redirect these organizations’ focus on social and environmental concerns (O’Brien et al 2000).

There are, however, several problems with this conceptualisation of current developments within the global economy. First, not all civil society actors are transnational and even if they are, they still operate at the local and national level simultaneously. Second, civil society actors are not by default opposed to neo-liberal globalisation. Some may actually support its extension and especially transnational business organisations such as the Trilateral Commission (<http://www.trilateral.org/>) have been crucial in driving globalisation. Finally, state and market are taken as ahistoric starting-points of analysis, investigating in what way global governance, i.e. state like structures, could control the global economy, i.e. market. It is not realised that the source of exploitation lies in the sphere of production organised around private property of the means of production and wage labour. Some re-distribution of the benefits of globalisation will, therefore, not solve the fundamental problem of exploitation within global capitalism. In short, the concept of global civil society is not clearly defined and there is no agreement over what it actually signifies. Liberal suggestions for tackling increasing global inequality intend to reform the current order, but do not aim at its transformation.

A neo-Gramscian, historical materialist analysis of resistance against neo-liberal globalisation goes beyond liberal reformism. Through a focus on the current social relations of production, forms of state and world order as well as the material capabilities, ideas and institutions operating at these three levels, there is first an analysis of the existing order and the social forces sustaining this order. Do we find a hegemony, where rule is based on a

broad alliance of social forces and is characterised by consensus in addition to coercion, or do we find a situation of supremacy, where rule has only limited support by social forces and relies predominantly on open force? In a second step, those social forces are identified, which could provide the nucleus of a counter-hegemonic project. Their location within the social relations of production is analysed as are their strategies and ideas. The emphasis is on a post-Modern prince, leading the counter-hegemonic project. This does not refer to an individual leader as Machiavelli's Prince, or a mass political party as Gramsci's Modern Prince, but 'something plural and differentiated, although linked to universalism and the construction of a new form of globalism, and of course, something that needs to be understood as a set of social and political forces in movement' (Gill 2003: 218). When analysing class struggles linked to this movement, the focus is not only on class fractions of capital and labour. Considering that neo-liberal restructuring implies the extension of exploitation into the sphere to social reproduction including the re-commodification of health services and the continuing destruction of the environment, the struggle by progressive forces against this type of exploitation can equally be understood as class struggle (van der Pijl 1998: 46-8). This provides then the basis for conceptualising the co-operation between trade unions and social movements in the resistance to neo-liberal globalisation (Bieler and Morton 2004b).

Think points

- Are there actual developments, which justify thinking in terms of an emerging global civil society?
- Is it possible to establish governance structures at the global level, similar to the national level?
- Are anti-globalisation movements simply misguided?

Conclusions

The core findings of this lecture can be summarised as follows:

- there is a general agreement in relation to the empirical facts such as rising FDI levels since the early 1970s, often related to globalisation. Explanations and conclusions drawn differ, however, depending on which IR/IPE approach is adopted;
- the GATT regime with its focus on lowering tariff barriers and, thereby, stimulating international trade, continued to operate during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s;
- the core development within trade related to globalisation is not the continuing increase in trade levels, but the qualitative shift reflected in the WTO dispute settlement mechanism and the expansion of the trade regime into intellectual property rights, services and investment;
- through these qualitative changes in international trade, the WTO, similarly to the IMF and World Bank, has started to push countries towards neo-liberal restructuring and, thereby, contributed to the undermining of the post-war international order of ‘embedded liberalism’;
- globalisation has resulted in higher levels of economic growth at the global level, but also higher levels of inequality. In other words, the distribution of globalisation gains is perceived as unjust;
- liberal scholars have called for the establishment of a new system of governance at the global level, to ensure a fairer distribution of economic gains. This system is supposed to be based on global citizenship and global civil society;
- more radical scholars point to the capitalist social relations of production as the cause of exploitation. They demand a transformation of neo-liberal globalisation, not its reformation.

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