A Response to Ian Linden

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Ian Linden's paper nicely complements his thought-provoking book, *A New Map of the World*. Both of them have exactly the qualities that over the years of his directorship we came to associate with the work of CIIR: rich and relevant information, much of it difficult to come by elsewhere; a clear and pragmatic view of realities; and an unyielding but unsectarian sense of ethical certainties. Not that that implies rigidity. On the contrary, I have the feeling that the paper shows that Linden has already moved on since writing the book, and if the book has emphases and approaches in it that are not mine, the development the paper seems to show brings us into almost complete agreement. Linden now, for example, draws into the analysis the enormously significant cases of India and China, which together make up about 40% of the world's population. Nor does he now lay so much emphasis on the Asian collapses of 1997–8: I take it this is because in the event the economies concerned recovered remarkably well, though there are of course important lessons for everyone to be learnt from those disasters. In the book he was rather cautious about the need to contest the agricultural subsidies of the USA and the EU[1], because it then seemed to him that to demand a level playing-field for third-world agriculture was to accept too much of what he called the neo-liberal agenda. I am delighted that he has now thrown caution to the winds, for these crimes against humanity are something that the first-world churches are definitely in a position to do something about. In the book he still seemed unsure whether to treat 'globalization' – whatever that may be – as a long-term historical process, or whether to accept the conspiracy theory that it was a post-1945 neo-liberal project (p. 62). Again I'm very glad that in the paper he clearly takes the line that long-term historical analysis is called for. The best thing I can do here therefore, I think, is to try to focus on some of the big issues that arise both from *A New Map of the World* and from the paper. Globalization is, unsurprisingly, a topic where the big picture matters – where the big picture is, virtually by definition, different from the local picture, and where the local example can be usefully generalized only if it is seen in the

[1] Ian Linden, *A New Map of the World* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), pp. 98–100.

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bigger context. I shall take three issues in turn: the economy, the state, and civil society.

The biggest issue is, of course, what globalization is. I am happy to accept the economistic definition Linden gives in the paper because I do think that the economic phenomenon is fundamental. The economy is the self-organization of human desires, of our needs and their satisfaction, as Hegel says[2], through our work to meet the needs of others. I do not see how an anthropology, as distinct from a theology, can go any deeper than that. There is a very important proviso, to which I shall come in a moment, but in practical terms the seemingly non-economic aspects of globalization – technological change, the information explosion, the widening of intellectual horizons, the mutual permeation of cultures – all either clearly derive from economic change or have very rapidly become inseparable from it. Anyway, most of the discussions of the issue tacitly assume some such economic definition, with the important proviso to which I still have to come. The really contentious issue – which in a sense determines what you mean by economic globalization – is how long you think it has been going on. My own view is that what we have been seeing in the last 25 or 50 years is only an intensification of a process of increasing international economic interaction which has been going on for longer than most of the nations concerned have been in existence. I do think though that that process went through a qualitative change around 1870. Already in 1848 the *Communist Manifesto* had predicted the advent of a global market, a 'Weltmarkt', but in the last third of the 19th century technological change in transport and communications and the completion of the last great journeys of European discovery realized that prediction by establishing a system of global, that is, planetary, and not just international, trade. At the same time the imperialist race for territory accelerated as it became a matter of practical concern that the world is a limited whole and land in it is a limited resource. The symbolic moment of definition is perhaps the Washington conference of 1884 which made the Greenwich meridian into the baseline for a conceptual grid embracing the world and accepted by the world. This was a new map of the world with a vengeance. As often happens, though, the imagination of the poets had anticipated the scientists and statesmen. The sense of a new and global unity runs through a book which I am sure gripped the schoolboy Ian Linden as much as it gripped me, and which afforded an oddly sidelong perspective on the pink-on-the-map geography that Linden so vividly evokes: Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, published in 1872–3. The dénouement of

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §§189–208: *Werke* (Theorie-Werkausgabe) ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 7, pp. 346–360.

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Verne's tale depends of course on the paradoxes of the soon to be fixed system of imaginary cartographic lines – a system which was also soon to determine physical and human reality in the preposterously arbitrary frontiers drawn for many territories, particularly in Africa.

Now if you think, as I do, and as I believe Linden is also inclined to think, that economic globalization is a long-term process that became a discrete and tangible phenomenon in the later 19th century, then your big picture of it will have certain distinctive features. The argument whether the late 20th-century phenomenon is really globalization or merely a reinstatement of the international market of the late 19th century[3] will lose its point – there is no reason why it can't be both. Equally there is no reason to assume that the process is now complete, any more than it was complete then – on the contrary, it would seem fairly obvious that it still has a long way to go. On the other hand, however, if what we are now experiencing is a deeply rooted historical process that took on a newly intensified form around 1870, a very important question arises about the nature of the interruption to it that occurred between 1914 and 1945, or even 1989. Did the process of internationalization of economic relations break down because of war, or was the war a consequence of the breakdown of internationalization? If the latter, if the wars, and the horrors of totalitarianism, were even partly a consequence of the turn to protectionism and isolationism in those years, there is a most earnest duty imposed on us not to repeat the errors of our predecessors and not to advocate policies that risk driving the world apart again into autarkic blocs that will eventually conflict. I need hardly say that the consequences of conflict would be all the more catastrophic for the enormously more destructive weapons that can now be deployed. A further, and related, feature of the big picture once it is given this historical frame, is a feature of special relevance to British thinkers, as Linden shows appealingly both in his paper and in the autobiographical opening chapter of his book. It becomes important to understand the role of the European empires in the initial process of globalization, properly so called, in the 75 years of war that interrupted it, and in the formation or deformation of the political economy and culture of the third and first worlds even today. When I say 'understand', I mean simply that there is here a historical and intellectual challenge that is yet to be met and that is certainly not met by the facile application of formulae such as 'colonialism' and 'post-colonialism'. I am not issuing yet another call for a collective guilt-trip.

There is, though, a second economic issue where Linden's view and mine may still be divergent. One of the main reasons why

[3] David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), pp. 3–8.

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'globalization' has become so contentious a concept, and a rallying-cry for street-demonstrations round the world, is that the extension and liberalization of world-trade is held to be productive of extreme poverty. Once we adopt the appropriate time-frame it becomes apparent that, if any historical thesis can be disproved, it is this one. In the nearly two centuries since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in the period, that is, in which the modern international economic system has been developing and taking on its global dimension, it has been possible for the number of human beings on the planet to multiply nearly six-fold. That in itself must be a good, even on fairly utilitarian criteria, and it is certainly a very great good if one believes that life itself is not just good but sacred. During that same period, however, the proportion of the world population in extreme poverty, as defined by the World Bank, has been steadily declining, from about 85% in 1820 to 75% in 1870 and to 24% in 1992[4]. There are obviously serious difficulties in establishing accurate and complete figures, but the trend is quite unambiguous. The proportional decline has been continuous and uninterrupted, though the rate slowed dramatically in the peak protectionist years of 1929 to 1950. In absolute terms, of course, the numbers have increased because the world's population has increased so much, but even in absolute terms it is worth noting that the numbers of those living on a dollar a day (or less) was 1.16 billion in 1999, a significant decline, incidentally, from 1.3 billion in 1992. In 1820 the figure was about 0.9 billion. So the achievement of nearly two centuries of international capitalism is that there are about 260 million more people living in extreme poverty – but there are about 5,000 million more people who are at least better off than that. The fundamentals of the economic system in which we have been living since 1820 are clearly benign.

The same cannot be said of the political system. This is where I come to the important proviso I promised earlier, and the second of my big issues. If economics is about the self-organization of our wants, and of the means we adopt for satisfying them, politics is about imposed organization by fear, the fear of violence (and ultimately of death), the deployment of which is entrusted to the state. On the state's monopoly of violence depend not only its powers of military action in defence, attack, and the maintenance of internal order, but also the sanctions by which it upholds the legal system and its own power of taxation. The physical force deployed or threatened by the state makes economic transactions possible by providing the guarantee that promises will be kept and property rights respected, but physical force has no part in economic transactions themselves.

[4] Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004) p. 158, citing François Bourguignon and Christian Morrison, 'Inequality among World Citizens", *American Economic Review* 92/4 (September 2002), pp. 727–44.

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The role of the state is precisely to keep economic behaviour free from the influence of physical force and to allow it to consist solely of the mutual adjustment – always partly satisfying and partly disappointing – of the desires of the contracting parties. From this analysis I deduce that direct state involvement in economic behaviour, whether through legislation, taxation or physical control (e.g. of the movement of people), is always dubious and always requires clear limitation in time, but that is an argument for another day. What matters in the context of our present discussion is that the international state system under which we live today, the structure of physical force which provides the framework for the increasingly internationalized, or as we say globalized, economic interaction of the world's population, is recent, experimental, manifestly unsatisfactory over large areas of the planet, and possibly unstable as a whole.

I emphasize that the structure is recent. The theory is that the surface of the world and its human population is administered by a couple of hundred nation-states, each of which exercises the state monopoly of violence over a defined territory. There is a further historical assumption that this political system is essentially a creation of the nineteenth century and so largely coincident with the rise of the global economic system, as nations have sought to give their pre-existing cultural identity both political and economic expression in a world community of other similar actors. Both the theory and its implied history seem to me false. Only at the end of the nineteenth century was it possible to conceive of the world's surface as subject in its entirety to some state or other and by that time the foundations of our current economic order had long been in place. Moreover the European and North American states to which most of this surface notionally belonged were not nation states. They were (and this is as true of the USA as of Europe) imperial states with a clear internal differentiation between metropolis and colonies. Only as the destruction of the empires proceeded from 1918 to 1989 was it possible for the metropolitan states to advance, if that is the word, to the rank of nation states, along with their former colonies. The territorial nation state is in practice a twentieth-century invention. Its development is in fact largely, and unsurprisingly, contemporaneous with the development of the structure of international agreements and international bodies which characterizes twentieth-century globalization. And, as Linden rightly remarks, many of the nation-states that have come into existence since 1945 have little more than their seat on these international bodies to demonstrate their statehood. The one thing more that they all have, of course, is access to the instruments of violence. The disappearance of the nineteenth-century imperial states has left swathes of the earth's surface, above all in Africa, at the mercy of monopolists of physical force which are none the less incapable of exercising the functions of a state over the territory

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notionally and often arbitrarily assigned to them: incapable of raising taxes or distributing benefits equally, of maintaining a legal system or guaranteeing property or a currency, of preserving public order or grounding their own legitimacy in popular elections. These are not failed states, for usually there has never been a functioning local state power in the territory concerned. Rather they are at best incipient states: a concentration of physical force that has yet to achieve the general acceptance that would make it an instrument of the people's will and so capable of sustaining an administration. At worst they are no better than the largest band of local brigands, possibly fighting it out with other aspirants in a civil war. These incipient state powers, however, are invested by the international system with sovereignty and legal personality and territorial integrity, with the right to receive aid monies and to purchase arms. The result, naturally enough, is corruption and crime on a very large scale. The dark underside of globalization, as Ian calls it in *A New Map of the World*, is a consequence, not of the growth of a worldwide economic system but of our failure to match it – as the colonial empires did match it – with a worldwide political system regulating the deployment of physical force. That is why some of the darkest corners of the present world order are to be found in areas of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America which have hardly been touched by the growth in world trade. In the absence of a credible state framework for economic activity, Africa, with 10% of the world's population, attracts only 2% of its foreign direct investment. Africa, Linden comments, 'is not integrated into "the global economy" in any meaningful sense' (p. 57). If the present political world order of territorial nation states linked by international agreements is, as I believe, an experiment dating roughly from 1945, it is by no means obvious that the experiment has yet succeeded, or will ever do so.

But even the high-income countries, where economic globalization is in full swing, can provide only partial evidence for the success of the political experiment. The countries of the European Union have clearly not found the theory of autonomous nation-states adequate to their needs. There may not yet be a common defence policy (though NATO has long been close to that) but in other areas derivative from the state monopoly of physical force – in law, taxation, currency, and control over the movements of citizens – the members of the Union have found it necessary and beneficial to pool their supposed sovereignty. Unfortunately, in its relations with the rest of the world, and especially with the low-income countries, the Union is guilty of far worse abuses of state power than are to be found in the dark corners out of the sunlight of globalization. It is an abuse of state power to take money from citizens by taxation and devote it to a system of agricultural subsidies which keeps a privileged few in the comfort of an obsolete way of life while causing impoverishment,

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displacement and misery to vastly greater numbers in the developing countries where their products are dumped at a price which in no way reflects the costs of production. In 2001 the total assistance to farmers in rich countries – i.e. principally North America, Europe, and Japan – amounted to $311 billion, more than the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa. The World Bank estimates that if world trade in agriculture were liberalized – i.e. if direct and indirect subsidies were abolished – the income of developing countries could by 2015 rise by $390 billion a year (Wolf p. 217). Equally it is an abuse of state power to close borders to economic migrants, that is, to prevent those willing to take employment from doing so simply because they are foreign nationals and local workers wish to maintain a closed shop. The proper response from a Western protectionist Dives incensed at the sweatshop conditions in which a third-world Lazarus has to work is not to demand the closure of Lazarus' factory and send him back to hoeing the desert but to offer him a job in his own factory. Lazarus might actually prefer to stay at home if he knew that the Western state would not impose tariffs to prevent his leaner and fitter third-world factory from putting Dives out of work, while the knowledge that Lazarus was free to emigrate might cause his employer to push up his wages.

No doubt it seems utopian to hope for a liberalization of the tyrannical rules on human movement that states currently impose, and for a restoration of the liberty enjoyed by the workers of the world in the late 19th century, the period of greatest human migration ever known. But because the nation-state model is so recently established and so shallowly rooted that hope is perhaps more reasonable than it may seem. Global governance may be nearer than we think. States will certainly continue, but there is no reason to assume that they will be nation-states, laying claim to complete control of their populations or their territory. More and more of their activities will be shared, either with other states or with international or supranational bodies. A crucial role in this gradual thickening of the interstate matrix, and so in the mediation between the two global systems, the economic and the political, will be played by what Hegel, modifying an eighteenth-century term, called 'civil society'.[5]

This is the third and final element in the big picture that I want to address. The term 'civil society' has been hijacked in recent discussions – and Ian Linden I am afraid is one of the hijackers – to mean something very different from Hegel's usage. When Linden speaks of a global civil society he means essentially international non-governmental organizations. To me that suggests not much more than the global chattering classes. Hegel's term applies to something much more

[5] Hegel, *op. cit.* §§182–188, pp. 339–346.

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robust. Civil society is for Hegel that area of social self-organization that does not yet consciously incorporate the state. It is not a system of leisure activities – it is unfair to characterize it as Linden does as 'Rotary, Round Table, Brownies and the Women's Institute' (p. 118) – it is the institutionalization of the world of work, the system of needs and their satisfaction, but without state control or reliance on the state's coercive power. So, for example, it would include pre-eminently such institutions as trades unions and professional associations like the General Medical Council, chambers of commerce, or the CBI; limited liability companies and stock exchanges; educational establishments, whether schools or universities, in so far as they are not simply extensions of the civil service; and charitable bodies, including churches, in so far as these are self-governing and privately financed. It even covers vaguer and more ephemeral groupings such as a neighbourhood, or a busload of passengers. Civil society, like the state and the market, is something we are *all* part of, it is not a collection of clubs. In the global context, civil society therefore means all those international aspects of our lives which are institutionalized but not part of the governmental or intergovernmental structure.

And so, at the early stage of globalization in which we find ourselves, the weightiest single element in global civil society, the non-governmental institution which gives most concrete expression to our international existence, is the multinational corporation. 'Multinational corporations', we read in *A New Map of the World*, 'with independently monitored codes of conduct are likely to instil virtuous behaviour and a recognition of values' (p. 148) – global values, I would add, the values of those who know they are on their way to becoming world citizens. Another significant, and even older, institution of global civil society is the republic of letters, the network of academies, learned societies and links between scholars, journalists, writers and artists, which even more consciously has for centuries been building up a common image of humanity. A third element, of course, is NGOs, which certainly have a role in global civil society, like other voluntary associations, but it is important to realize their limitations. They require no apology when they represent a particular interest group, such as trades unionists, or the disabled, or regional producers of particular commodities. But when they exist only to voice concerns about a range of issues that are not germane to the economic well-being of their members they face a serious problem of legitimacy. Unlike the governments that they lobby, that is, whose actions they seek to influence, they are not the chosen representatives of the people for whom and to whom they are responsible. Indeed they are usually not responsible to anyone: if their advice proves disastrously wrong, it is not they who will be voted out of office. They are responsible, in other words, not to the people whose interests

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they speak for, but to their image of those people – they are responsible to their conscience, and conscience is the force that drives them. One of the most impressive features of *A New Map of the World* is the honesty with which, at the start, Linden faces this problem, and gives himself the task of defining the ethical basis of NGO action, of giving rules to the NGO conscience.

This is not so much of an issue for the fourth and last element in global civil society I wish to mention, and the one of most direct concern in our present context – I mean the Church (possibly the churches, and possibly even the faith communities, but that is yet another argument for another day). The Church does not have to apologize for being the voice of conscience: that is what it is understood to be, and if it is heard, that is how it is heard. It speaks for the consciences of all its members, for the Spirit of God speaking through them, and they are a significant proportion of the total membership of global civil society, and so of the global economic and political systems. What should that voice be saying? I think, as Ian Linden also persuasively argues, it should be articulating above all the value of the common good, the good of all humanity in so far as that good can be achieved by political action. That means speaking for the development of political institutions that can act for the common good, that can create checks and balances to counter the use of political power – that is, in the end, the power of violence – on behalf of sectional interests. It does not mean calling for the development of political institutions that are themselves motivated by conscience – that is a call either for an absurdity, or for a theocracy, in so far as the two are distinct. And it does not mean calling for the political direction of economic behaviour – that too is either an absurdity, or fascism, in so far as the two are distinct. In fact it means virtually the opposite: calling, and working, for an end to the political manipulation of economic life, for the true liberalization of world trade, for the elimination of all barriers to the free movement of labour, and so for a globalization that is worthy of the name.

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