

## GLOBALIZATION AND THE NATION

### Keynote Address to the Concepts of the Nation Symposium, 2007

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Thank you Prime Minister. Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour to have been instructed to give this speech.

To begin with a brief Pakeha whakapapa, my family has a special relationship with Dominion Day. My Dalmatian gum-digging great grandfather was delighted by the achievement of Dominion status, which he must have felt was somehow more inclusive of non-Britons than was “Colony”. He wanted to name his second of ten children – my grandmother – “Dominion”. Fortunately for her, he was dissuaded, and called her Zorica or, “little Dawn” instead - still celebrating New Zealand’s new dawn of dominion status. Whether or not my grand-daughters face any risk of being named “Republic” is a question we may consider as the day wears on, but it is not one I will be addressing directly. Instead, I propose to background our discussion with a consideration of two powerful forces in New Zealand’s past, present, and future: globalization and the nation.

Globalization and nationalism are sometimes seen as bogeymen, competing to gobble us up. Each does have a malign and dangerous extreme. But each also covers a wide spectrum of things and thoughts, most of which are less easily value-judged.

Globalization commenced about 100,000 years ago when a clever but aggressive ape, which later immodestly named itself *homo sapiens*, began its slow march from central African to Patagonia and almost everywhere in between. The crowning achievement of this first wave of globalization was humanity’s movement into the islands of the vast Pacific, courtesy of those remarkable seafarers, the Polynesians. There is increasing evidence that Polynesians made it to the Americas, but they left again and the crowning achievement of their crowning achievement was of course the settlement of New Zealand. There is no separating New Zealand and globalization, never has been, and probably never will be.

But these islands did sit out the next global wave, which began about 4,000 years ago with the emergence of long-term, long-range, systems of interaction, mostly linking the river civilizations of China, India, Mesopotamia and Egypt. The bronze age marked a new stage in regional interaction. Copper and tin tend to appear in widely separated locations, which have to be linked to make bronze, hence the first incorporation of the peripheral island of Britain into an intercontinental system with the visits of Phoenicians to Cornwall. The desire of civilized elites for luxuries was another driver of interaction. China sent out for furs and sea cucumbers, sandalwood and shark fin; Rome sent out for wild animals to be brought to the circus for Russell Crowe to kill. From about 200 BC, regular intercontinental *exchange* – as against sending out - emerged, using routes such as the Silk Road. Chinese and Roman merchants occasionally visited each other's empires, but such trade was usually through intermediaries.

Around 1500 A.D. a new, European led, wave of globalization began. Europeans plugged the Americas back into the world from 1492; and established direct routes to South and East Asia. The world's first truly global industry emerged – sugar: an Asian crop produced on stolen Amerindian land by enslaved African labour for the sweet tooth of Europe. Historians have yet to highlight the importance of addiction in this phase of global trade: sugar, which is virtually addictive, chocolate, rum, tobacco, coffee, tea, opium. Expanding Europe was something of a drug dealer, but at least it had the decency to addict itself as well as others. Finally, in 1769, expanding Europe in the shape of explorers Cook and De Surville plugged the last of the six inhabited continents, Australasia, into the world system. Again, New Zealand history was a global climax.

European leadership of this wave of globalization did not necessarily mean European dominance. Many historians now argue, quite convincingly, that China remained the largest and most sophisticated economy in the world until about 1750, at least equal to the whole of Europe. A sign of this was that the world had no manufactured goods that China wanted, whereas the world wanted Chinese silk and porcelain. China was therefore able to insist on cash for its goods. The vast new supply of silver, wrenched

from American mines by Spanish conquerors, therefore tended to end up in China. While Europeans did the dirty work of imperialism, killing like ferrets and dying like flies, the Chinese sat back and took the profits. New Zealand's first export market, for seal furs in the 1790s, was China, and our trade with that country now enters its fourth century. China has been the default centre of the world economy for 2,000 years, and the last 200 may be merely a European moment. But letting others do your fighting or trading is a risky business, because they get better at it, and war and opium led China into temporary decline in the century after 1840.

The penultimate wave of globalization involved the rise of mass transfer, which began about 1815. For the first time, necessities as well as luxuries were traded long-range, World-wide shipment of goods may have amounted to a million tons a year in 1800. By 1840, it had reached 20 million tons, and 80 million by 1870. Developments in literacy, printing, banking and emigration meant that not just goods, but also people, information and money ceased to trickle across oceans and began to flow. The leading source of these flows, and the chief market for the reverse flow of goods, was the British Isles. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain replaced China as the world's gyroscope, or, if you prefer, as chief spider in the world-wide web. Britain became the first site of industrialization and the prime source of a vast settler diaspora as well as global hegemon. The remarkable neo-Britains it produced included settler New Zealand.

From New Zealand's perspective, this wave of globalization came in two great surges. In the first, 1840s-1880s, 400,000 British and Irish people and 71 million pounds of British money were injected into New Zealand. Frenzied growth resulted, economically comparable to that in China today and demographically far faster. In the 1880s, the bust came, the first surge receded, and the second began to arrive.

New Zealand ceased to drag money *out* of Britain and began to pour goods in: wool, frozen meat, and dairy products – enough to feed London. This second surge had cultural as well as economic dimensions: the great meatships formed a ferry service linking two ends of the earth. New Zealand became London's farthest-flung town supply district; London became New Zealand's cultural capital. But there was nothing necessarily cringing in New Zealand's approach to this strange "re-colonization". New Zealand's average living standards were higher than those of Britain; New

Zealanders had privileged access to the world's leading food, money, and job markets. New Zealanders considered themselves to be Britons too, but Better Britons.

This British-dominated global system was severely shaken between 1914 and 1945 by world wars and depression. U-Boats threatened the ferry service between the North and South Islands of the system, Britain and New Zealand. By the late 1960s, re-colonization had largely collapsed; New Zealand lost its other North Island to the European Union; and the latest wave of globalization began. Some pundits still mistake it for the first, ignoring globalization's long history, or exaggerate the novelty and potentiality of the current wave. New Zealand and its relationships with the world changed even more, and grew far faster, in its first fifty years, 1840-1890, then in the last fifty. Then too it was prone to "future-shocking" – exaggerating the inevitability and *exponentiality* of change. Optimists in the 1870s expected New Zealand to be a super-power of 100 million by 2000, just as some global prophets now expect us to be a suburb of Los Angeles by 2050.

Future shocking is an old game, and we should be wary of it. New Zealand has been a global nation since the 1880s at the latest, economically and culturally inter-dependent with the other end of the earth.

But it remains true that some forms of global interaction have reached unprecedented heights in recent years. Three statistics indicate the shift in scale and direction as far as New Zealand is concerned. In 1956, New Zealand's overseas exports weighed 12 million tons – already huge - of which 75% by value went to Britain. In 2006, exports weighed 22 million tons, of which 5% went to Britain. In 1956, 74,000 people arrived in New Zealand from overseas, including 27,000 tourists. In 2006, the figure was 4.5 million, including 2.5 million tourists. In 1956 it cost several hundred of today's dollars to instantly send a page of information between New Zealand and London by telephone or telegraph. Now, it costs a fraction of a cent – to London or Reykjavik - at least for the 69% of New Zealanders connected to the internet. The flow of goods between New Zealand and the world has increased, but was already high in 1956 – much more than the whole of world trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The flows of people and information have skyrocketed. Indeed, as far as information is concerned, distance has been virtually abolished. It is now possible to write global history in New Zealand,

and New Zealand history globally. New Zealand's gateways to the world are wide open; our capacity to close them is limited; and all roads no longer lead to London.

So far, so good - or at least, so inevitable. But globalization has its worrying elements. Viruses, human, animal, and computer, spread as fast as good ideas; ecological overload threatens on an increasing number of fronts; and dependency and uni-polar hegemony have their dangers. New Zealand is, and will remain, dependent on the rest of the world. This is one reason why globalism is so important to us – few other countries are as trade-dependent and as travel-prone. We are addicted to global interactivity and will likely remain so. But we are no longer dependent on only one part of the world; and multiple partners gives at least a chance of “divide and avoid being ruled”. As for hegemony, New Zealand has so far managed to keep this in the family – for the last 200 years the world's policemen have been Mother England or Uncle Sam. True, Uncle has cut us out of his will for disobedience, but may be having second thoughts, and invasion remains unlikely. The prospective next world hegemon. China, has a long and relatively un-aggressive history in the role. China is the country that had the fleets to conquer the world in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century – before Europe – but decided against it on the grounds that the world wasn't worth it.

Another danger of ultra-globalization may be of special concern to New Zealand – convergence to the point of homogenization. Global integration leads to the convergence of prices, products and services; everywhere becomes more similar – eventually, perhaps, even the same. This extreme globalization might actual lead to its own demise. If everywhere makes the same and looks the same, why bother to trade or travel? And what happens then to a country that lives off trade and travel?

*Difference* is literally New Zealand's stock in trade. With one or two exceptions, we are not a mass producer, but a niche producer, and global homogenization by definition reduces niches. The world is New Zealand's market place, and should remain so, but we need to have distinctively New Zealand things to sell it. In short, we should embrace globalization, but think twice about having sex with it, and here staid old nationalism may remain a useful chaperone.

It all depends, of course, on what kind of nation you are talking about. The archetype is the ethnic nation. Most definitions would include some or all of the following: real

or imagined shared descent; distinct language; distinct culture; the aspiration or reality of one's own sovereign state. "One's own" normally meant only one: minorities were to be marginalized, assimilated, even expelled or eliminated – "ethnic cleansing". Ethnic nationalism was a notoriously jealous god, who permitted no Significant Others in the same country. In extreme cases, ethnic nationalism demanded still more: that co-nationals in other countries were to be incorporated into the Fatherland - where there are Germans, there is Germany. Understandably, it is ethnic nationalism that gives nationalism its bad name, and leads some to hope for its demise.

New Zealand has had some experience of ethnic nationalism, mild compared to other countries but traumatic in its time. For 120 years after 1840, Maori and other minorities were told either that they were dying out physically, or that they had to disappear culturally, through assimilation, into a British New Zealand nation. Get real, the latest versions of the argument ran, New Zealand is too small for more than one identity. This ethnic nationalism encountered several problems, however. Maori refused to disappear – indeed they increased tenfold in numbers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Added to this, the mono-cultural New Zealand-ness on offer was not mono-cultural at all, The very people who were telling Maori that New Zealand could have only one identity actually had two themselves: they were Britons as well as New Zealanders.

As noted earlier, this was not cringing colonialism – New Zealanders were Better Britons. They were less subjects of the British Empire than co-owners of it. In 1947, politicians in this parliament debated whether "we" should really be giving independence to India. This was slightly less ludicrous than it sounds: key British organizations such as Oxford University Press and the Royal Air Force were run by New Zealanders at the time. Furthermore, "British" was not an ethnic nationalism, but a pan-ethnic nationalism. It included Scots and Welsh as well as English, Celts as well as Anglo-Saxons; Australians, Anglo-Canadians, and New Zealanders as well as old Britons. "British" sought to combine select ethnic nations, and was more successful than comparable pan-nationalism such as Austria-Hungary and Yugoslavia. Between the 1880s and the 1950s at least, most people living in these islands had no doubt that they were both New Zealanders and Britons.

Recently, I was given a 500 piece jigsaw map of Great Britain. It was “devised and wholly manufactured in New Zealand” in the early 1940s for local use, and advertised as “One puzzle no Nazi can solve”. Presumably, the idea was to equip you for chance meeting with a suspiciously German-looking person, dripping fresh from the U-Boat. He would say “Guten Tag. Vo ist Vellington?”, and you would knowingly reply “Well, before I tell you that mate, lets sit down and do a nice jigsaw”. If he did not know where Rutland was, you had him.

Nationalism can be defined in terms other than ethnic. One growing strand of modern thought emphasizes *civic* nationalism: a community of those people who share a state regardless of ethnicity. A civic nation does not discriminate against any of its constituent ethnicities. In principle, it is a club that anyone can join. In practice, entry is limited by the *Titanic* lifeboat factor – too many and the boat will sink – but immigration policy in a civic nation does not select for ethnicity. The civic nation is a worthy concept, and New Zealand should run with it to some extent. It requires borders, and no country in the world has clearer borders than these islands – at least a thousand miles of ocean on all sides. Even if the New Zealand civic nation is merely a nutter-free zone in the South Pacific, it is worth having. But there is something a little soulless, bloodless, and unhistorical about the notion of having nothing more than a civic identity, defined solely by the boundaries of the state. Too bland a civic nationalism would presumably change instantly if we joined a Tasman Federation.

There is yet another variety of nationalism, though here “ethnicity”, “people”, or “culture” may be better terms. The key concept is that of “imagined community” – that resonant phrase of Benedict Anderson’s, or Benedict Arnold as my students prefer to call him. In a small, actual community, you know everyone, or at least know someone who knows them. In a large imagined community, you assume an affinity with strangers who share that community. Imagined communities may or may not play by the rules of ethnic or civic nationalism. They can be helped along by myths of shared descent or by shared language, but they tend to be naturally generated by increasing interactions among the imagined “Us”, and increasing encounters with at least one imagined “Them”, which helps define “Us”. An imagined community requires a shared, but not necessarily exclusive, collective identity and a distinct culture, but not necessarily language. It may emerge from a single old ethnicity, or

from several, which hybridize into a distinctive blend that amounts to more than the sum of its parts. Imagined or not, like them or not, national or not, these new *cultures*, shall we call them, are historical realities and their birth can be traced historically.

New Zealand has proved to be a good incubator of new cultures. These islands have produced several in the past thousand years. First came the transformation of East Polynesian settlers into Maori tribes, a stunning adaptation from tropical islands to the Bluff. Before contact, Maori did not have a single collective identity or imagined community. There was no unifying Other and by late pre-contact history there was limited long-range interaction as well. Ngapuhi and Kai Tahu were as different as it got. Iwi continued to be the bedrock of Maori resilience after the world arrived again from 1769. Some continue to argue that there are no Maori without iwi, or even that the notion of a Maori collectivity is a disempowering colonialist fiction. History, in my view, is against them. From about 1850, helped by increasing interaction between tribes and confrontation with the Pakeha Them, something that could be called Maori nationalism did emerge. It took the form of prophetic and pan-tribal movements: Kai Ngarara, Pai Marire, the movements of Titokowaru, Te Kooti, Rua Kenana, and Ratana, and arguably the King Movement and the Young Maori Party as well. Imagined communities emerge whether one likes it or not, and Maori tribes and a Maori nation may have to learn to live together, while the rest of us learn to live with both. A Maori culture can co-exist with tribal cultures, constructed from them but also more than just the sum of its parts. Maori television is a notable site of such culture today.

Pakeha were British-derived, but as we have seen “British” meant several ethnicities, not one. Scots were proportionately twice as numerous in New Zealand than in Britain. And Pakeha were not just British – they were Irish too, and also acquired a crucial yeast of continental Europeans to give that intellectual edge (!). Similar blendings took place in Australia and elsewhere, but they were not the same. The proportions of the ingredients differed, as did local influences. In 1850, communication between Auckland and Dunedin was more difficult than between either and Sydney. But steamships, from the 1860s, and rail and telegraph, from the 1870s, increased interaction and softened the strong early regionalisms. Maori provided a Significant Other, a Them against which Us could be defined.

Like Maori identity, Pakeha identity is somewhat problematic. Some dislike the term, suspecting that it originated in a Maori joke. Even if it did, terms are allowed to change their meanings: Slav, Welsh, and Black all had derogatory origins. Whatever you call them, Pakeha are quite hard to define. Are Old Chinese New Zealanders, with roots dating back to the 1860s, Pakeha? Can Maori be Pakeha as well as Maori? Pakeha culture is also hard to pin down, borrowing some of its symbols from Maori. But difficulties of definition are no excuse for cultural cleansing and, like Maori, Pakeha are here to stay.

This, so far, is the old bicultural story, but we have to go beyond biculturalism whether we like it or not. Close on 20% of New Zealanders are neither Pakeha nor Maori, and the figure is predicted to reach about 30% in a couple of decades. A third distinctively New Zealand culture is arguably in the process of forming among young locally-born Pacific Islanders in Auckland. It could be called Nesian or Pasifika, and has given us Bro'town, Nesian Mystiks, Sione's Wedding and Jonah Lomu. Its elders may resist the notion that this is anything other than the sum of Samoan, Tongan, and other Pacific Island New Zealanders, but we have seen that ethno-genesis is not easily controlled. I myself think there is something magic about it, about having a new player on the cultural block. Other melds – Kiwasians? – may eventually emerge, and there will always be New Zealanders who refuse to slot into any of the cultural categories, so we need the civic nation too. Nationalism may be a jealous god, but in New Zealand it will just have to get over it.

What happens when we put globalism and nationalism together? The two can be misused to trip up each other's benign forms, and I will give a couple of examples from my own trade, history. New Zealand historians between the 1960s and the 1980s, in an understandable over-reaction to a century of integration with Britain, sought to decolonize New Zealand history by pretending the world did not exist. The second edition of the *Oxford History of New Zealand* itself noted that this was the greatest weakness of the first edition. In fact, "fortress new Zealand" is no more appropriate for the past than it is for the present or future. New Zealand history is the intersection of two of the world's most global peoples, Polynesians and Europeans,

and outside influence remains massive. New Zealand history is intrinsically intertwined with global history.

Conversely, globalism is still misused to defend a neo-colonial residue: the tendency to teach our seventh formers 16<sup>th</sup> century English dynastic history rather than 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand/global history. The current reform of the school history curriculum looks set to sentence another generation of New Zealanders to the Tudors and Stuarts. Gazing at our own navel is, it seems, to be prevented by gazing at someone else's – even though history focusing on Henry VIII's navel has been laughed out of English classrooms for the past decade or two. It is in fact 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand history, not 16<sup>th</sup> century English dynastic history, which properly understood is the more trans-national, trans-disciplinary, trans-cultural, innovative, and dramatic – let alone more relevant to New Zealanders.

Henry VIII may make good television, but only when his navel is dropped a few inches, and only with the help of Sam Neill. Sam as George Grey would be at least as interesting. It is time for Cromwell's solution to the Tudors and Stuarts, if not their Hanoverian descendants.

But globalization and nationalism can also be used more positively - as rubber gloves for handling each other's vices, and stimulants for each other's virtues. It was globalization that generated the migrations, interactions, and encounters that created New Zealand's cultures. Multiple identities and cultures can be inconvenient and complicated, but they also yield a richer, more diverse, and more innovative country – and a country with more to offer the world. On the other hand, the nation has long been a useful constraint on global homogenization. It has long said to empires and world systems: “we will not be swamped”. Indeed, the likes of Ernest Gellner and Tom Nairn argue that modern nationalism emerged as an antidote to imperialism and globalization. Ethnic nationalism is a dangerous antidote, but civic nationalism need not be. It could be defined as a point of mediation between the global and the local, the general and the particular. It allows room for multiple cultures within it, which act to restrain and enhance it as it does globalization. Another answer to the question of what happens when you put globalization and nationalism together is simply “New Zealand”.

