

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ETHICAL BRITON AND ITS EFFECT ON
BRITISH SECURITY IMAGERY**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper argues that foreign policy making is inextricably linked to a country's secular morality and economic interests. Far from treating decisions to wage war, or not, as the domain of politicians and interested elites, or as the result of systemic imperatives and power structures, the foreign policy explanation offered here argues that public morality and ethical codes redefine a country's national identity and, as a result, redefine the country's understanding of external threats to its security. In this paper I offer a sociological explanation for how external threats are socially constructed. This explanation criticizes the mainstream IR understanding of power as being mostly the equivalent of material power. I argue that understandings of threat and security considerations cannot be explained without reference to public morality and economic incentives. My theorization about the cultural and economic determinants of a country's national image is based on insights from Gramsci and it contrasts with the non-material ontology of the constructivist literature. Power understood as merely material power might be necessary but not sufficient in the creation of an external threat. In this paper I look at Britain's national identity formation during the Blair administrations in order to explain British foreign policy towards Iraq.

More precisely, I look at what constitutes the 'moral' and 'good' Briton just before and during the Blair administrations and then show how this redefined morality of the British citizen at home informs the understanding of current day Britishness and, as a result, guides British foreign policy abroad. I argue that the home grown moralism in Britain since the mid-1990s coupled with the country's imaginary positioning abroad, itself an articulation of the legacy the empire in post-WWII Britishness, have redefined

the 'moral' and 'good' Briton along such lines that the war against Iraq was possible, even necessary. This redefinition of the 'moral' Briton since the mid-1990s reflects the interests of British corporations in the post-Fordist economic phase of capitalist development as this is presented in the language of economic globalization. The new economic needs for efficiency in production, managerialism in the operation of enterprises, and flexibility in the hiring and firing of labor force (in essence the new economic restructuring that Britain is undergoing) redefine the present day 'good' and 'moral' Briton as someone who has responsibilities as well as rights towards her community; as someone who acknowledges that both herself and her community have mutual duties; as someone who is not driven by her own self-interest but, rather, by 'enlightened self-interest; and as someone who understands that she is a member of a community to which she owes to give back the rights that she herself enjoys.

I particular I look at the restructuring of the welfare state under the Blair administration as a site where this 'managerial' ethos is being contested. Welfare restructuring is an important societal location where the state inculcates the British to what is a fitting behavior for the 'good' and 'upright' Briton in the late 1990s. What is a fitting behavior for the decent present day Briton is transmitted to her via the new balance that the state creates between the rights that are befitting to her and the duties that she owes to her community. Such a balance between duties and obligations, or better still the reciprocal relation between rights and duties 'equally' shared by the individual and the community, is the basis on which the restructuring of the welfare under is based. It is at this site, among others, where the redefinition of the ethical Briton is taking place and from where the current understanding of Britishness is being remodeled.

My analysis of foreign policy locates a site where power is contested and ultimately constituted in the form of a single national identity for a given country. The argument is that a country's self image, or national identity, provides the conceptual lenses through which a nation sees, or does not see, security threats. As a result, we cannot understand countries' foreign policy behavior unless we locate both the places where power is contested and the carriers of this power. I suggest that the most important constitutive element of a national identity, the element that has the power to legitimize one national identity over another in the eyes of the people in any given country, is an identity's articulation of public morality. The carriers of power operate within the confines of a country's national borders. On the one hand, we have prominent socioeconomic groups and sectors that want to readjust their country's orientation so as to best serve their narrow material interests. In their effort to persuade the rest of the society they seek to shape popular beliefs and moral codes according to their own interests and vision. Such efforts are not uncontested. The sense of morality and cultural practices of the common people give them enough influence to also shape the final national consensus over ideology and national interest. It is this final consensus over secular morality that informs the content of a nation's national identity. In brief, material interests, moral codes, and social practices interact to produce the nation's identity and national interest.

But power does not rest exclusively with these traditional carriers, like individuals, socioeconomic and interest groups. It also operates in the elusive arenas of discourses and ideology. When socioeconomic groups formulate their preferred political agendas with the purpose of co-opting secular mass culture, their political ideologies

borrow from popular beliefs and codes of public morality as much as they try to redefine them. Ultimately, the power of persuasion rests with the different discourses that emanate from these wars over beliefs and ideologies. The ideology that best captures popular beliefs and is the most evocative of public moral codes is the one that will prevail nationally, the one that will become the national ideology. An ideology becomes national because it is able to popularize its code of morality.

I apply this theoretical framework to the analysis of Great Britain's foreign policy under New Labour after 1997. I argue that the party's vision of the United Kingdom as a great power with a moral purpose abroad reflects the new moral values of the British public as these evolved during and after the Thatcher years. In addition, the British view of itself as the intermediary between the American and European power centers explains the country's attempts to broker a deal between the diverging foreign policies of the U.S. and Europe over Iraq at the United Nations. It also explains why probably New Labour sees its recent policy towards Iraq as an attempt towards multilateralism, and not as a nod to unilateralism.

BRITISHNESS AT THE END OF THE 20TH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Recently British foreign policy towards Iraq has been the focus of attention, and criticism, for two reasons. First, because of its perceived unilateral strand in choosing to go to war without UN authorization. Secondly, because it appears to have followed, once more, the American lead in honor of the 'special' relation that these two countries share.

But how unilateral does the Blair administration see its foreign policy, and to what an extent has it been guided by the special Anglo-American bond when deciding to ally with the U.S. over Iraq?

I argue that in order to come closer to the real motives behind British foreign policy we need to move away from a descriptive analysis of manifested foreign policy behaviors, in this case unilateralism and the Americanization of British foreign policy, and delve into this country's perception of itself. I suggest that the recent British foreign policy towards Iraq has not been motivated by beliefs about the merits of unilateralism versus multilateralism, nor has it been the by-product of the special bond between the U.S. and Britain. I argue that it is what it means to be British that has made the country see its recent external security environment in a particular way and has guided the country in its recent foreign policy choices. Specifically, I find that the modern understanding of Britishness is enmeshed with the legacy of the empire and successive reconfigurations of the notions of greatness and significance. I also find that post-cold war Britishness is informed by the promotion, and unleashing, of a moral crusade at home. Exemplified during the years of Margaret Thatcher, the uplifting of the British nation from a state of impotence and insignificance was predicated on reforming the morality of the individual.¹ The national campaign against decadence, the prevailing evil in British society,² was legitimized under Thatcher and championed the compatibility between individual freedom and order. The war against disorder, lawlessness, and decadence at home also necessitated an interventionist state par excellence which was

¹ Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Anatomy of Thatcherism*, (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 44.

² Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Anatomy*, p. 34.

supposed to “seize control”³ and dismantle all institutions that allowed morality among the British people to plummet. This conception of individual morality is directly connected to the vision of the entrepreneurial citizen that the neoliberal free markets necessitate and the new era of globalization demands.⁴ It is this new conception of individual morality that makes the retrenchment of the welfare institutions acceptable, a societal restructuring that follows the economic restructuring under globalization and its language of fiscal austerity, welfare curtailment, and elimination of supply-side rigidities.⁵ What is important to argue at this point is that the New Labour’s moral crusade abroad in support of individual rights, human rights, and the rule of law and its conviction that new forms of intervention in the sovereign territory of other countries is warranted in this new era of international politics is **not** a continuation of the secular morality advanced by Thatcher. It is, though, a continuation of the economic restructuring that has been under way in Britain since the Thatcher years. It is because of the combination of economic and social factors that affect the formation of present day Britishness, that the ‘inevitable alliance’ between the U.S. and Britain is neither inevitable nor irreversible. As far as Britain sees itself as beacon of human rights, justice, equality, and the rule of law abroad and while it continues to aspire to be the bridge between Europe and the U.S., then foreign policy actions that align the country with the U.S., the war against Iraq being such a case, can be expected. This is so because the premise of such a role abroad is solidly located at socio-economic developments and

³ Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Anatomy*, p. 46.

⁴ Bob Jessop, Klaus Nielsen and Ove K. Pedersen, “Structural Competitiveness and Strategic Capacities: Rethinking State and International Capital,” in Jerzy Hausner, Bob Jessop, Klaus Nielsen, *Institutional Frameworks of Market Economies*, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993).

⁵ Colin Hay and Matthew Watson, “Diminishing Expectations: The Strategic Discourse of Globalization in the Political Economy of New Labour,” in *Fortress America*, forthcoming

processes at home.

In the first part of this paper I am going to look at New Labour's discourse regarding the international environment and the kind of foreign policy that Britain should follow. More specifically, I look at how New Labour has understood Britishness since 1997 and how this conceptualization of the country's national identity made the war against Iraq possible, even necessary. This part of the paper then, looks at only one sphere where the national identity of post-cold war Britain is being manifested. This sphere consists of the official speeches and proclamations by members of the New Labour party. As such, this realm of political manifestations provides a first cut at the constituent parts of British national identity in the post-cold war era. The second part of the paper provides a full fledged exegesis for why Britishness came to be perceived the way it did. In order to provide an explanation for why the British nation is being projected along the lines of the New Labour party's proclamations I turn to the British society and unearth the ethical codes and secular morality that permeate most of its groups and inform their understanding of who they are and how they partake in the British social experiment. I do this by looking at how the restructuring of the welfare state redefines the understanding of the 'good' and 'moral' Briton during the years of the Blair administration.

I

THE NEW LABOUR'S MORAL CRUSADE ABROAD

British motives for promoting the war against Iraq cannot be discerned without a look at the country's self-image and its national trajectory. One of the reasons often given

for British advocacy of the war against Iraq is the special British-American relationship.⁶ This argument assigns Britain as the disciple due to the power differential between the U.S. and herself. Far from seeing Britain as America's stand-by advocate, the argument in this paper points to a different interpretation of British motives. Having examined the formulation of British foreign policy in the first quarter of the 19th century, I have found that it was the idea of empire, and its subsequent transmutations, which has been the driving force behind British foreign policy. And the legacy of the empire, clothed in the language of the great power, remained the sine qua non point of reference even after the empire was long gone. In a similar vein, scholars who study the special Anglo-American relationship also concur that the intercontinental closeness between Britain and the U.S. results, as far as Britain is concerned, from Britain's aspirations to be a global player.⁷

In 1998, Tony Blair used his novel concept of the "Third Way," until then reserved for domestic politics, to reconfigure Britain's role in the international setting. Some scholars explained Blair's evocation of the "Third Way" as an attempt to refashion the image of Britain along the lines of a good international citizen.⁸ Robin Cook, Blair's first foreign minister, had already prepared his country for Britain's moral crusade in international politics. In 1997 Cook argued that British foreign policy had to be based on an ethical content, one that would redefine the country's national interest away from the traditional *realpolitik* conception. The defining ingredient of this foreign policy was the promotion of human rights, followed with stricter controls on arms exports, concern for

⁶ Mark Wickham-Jones, "Labour's Trajectory in Foreign Affairs: the Moral Crusade of a Pivotal Power?" in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade?* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 23.

⁷ Richard Hodder-Williams, "Reforging the 'Special Relationship': Blair, Clinton and Foreign Policy," in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, p. 241.

⁸ Tim Dunne, and Nicholas Wheeler, "The Blair Doctrine: Advancing the Third Way in the World," in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, pp. 61-77.

environmental issues, and the use of developmental aid for dealing with poverty.⁹ In 1999, Blair stated clearly his country's commitment to this new internationalism, and then went on to define precisely what kind of international practices the concept of internationalism required on the part of states. He argued that in an era of globalization countries had to assume responsibility for the well being of the international community. With the international community as the focal point of international politics, countries will be guided by "a more subtle blend of mutual self-interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish."¹⁰

Blair's new vision of the responsibilities entrusted in countries vis-à-vis the international community had practical consequences for the legitimate use of force against sovereign nations. As the definition of good international citizenship was now expanded to not only include how countries behaved at the international level but, primarily, how they behaved within their own sovereign territory towards their own subjects, Blair was articulating a normative justification for intervening in the domestic affairs of other states. But his concept of good citizenship went even further than that. It justified intervention and direct interference in sovereign territory even in the absence of support from the international community. While in opposition between 1994 and 1997, he emphasized the close connection between rights and responsibilities by arguing that "the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe." In a subsequent speech in 1999 in South Africa he explained what the international consequences of this dictum were. He said that "the international community has a responsibility to act ... Sometimes, if collective action cannot be agreed or taken in time [this will be] through countries with a sense of

⁹ Mark Wickham-Jones, "Labour's Trajectory in Foreign Affairs," in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy*, p. 4, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

global responsibility taking on the burden. People say you can't be self-appointed guardians of what's right and wrong. True, but when the international community agrees certain objectives and then fails to implement them, those who can act, must."¹¹ These objectives were the promotion of democratic values, support of human rights, respect for the rule of law, and protection of the international environment. Blair was so convinced for the need to establish new norms for states' actions, and thus put into practice what he saw as the emergence of a new internationalism, that he insisted that UN authorization was not necessary for interventions. This international moral crusade could just as well be undertaken by NATO or by two countries coming together, like Britain and the US, he argued.

GREATNESS WITHOUT AN EMPIRE

There is a thread that links Britain's recent moral crusade abroad to the nation's traditional understanding of what it means to be a great power. Blair linked his logic of intervention to Britain's self-conception as an influential power in world politics. In the fall of 1999 he asserted that Britain was still a pivotal power in international affairs because its new ethical "enlightened self-interest"¹² legitimately positioned the country at the center of the alliances that currently matter the most, Europe and the U.S. Blair argued that it was this positioning of Britain at the core of the important power centers and its endowment with a moral purpose that allowed the country to once again coordinate the actions of the other powerful countries. He said: "[n]early forty years ago

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹² Richard Little, "Conclusions: the Ethics and the Strategy of Labour's Third Way in Foreign Policy," in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade?* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 256.

Dean Acheson's bard – that Britain had lost an Empire but not yet found a role – struck home. Successive generations of British politicians tried – unsuccessfully – to find a way back ... However, that search can now end. We have a new role ... not as a superpower but as a pivotal power, as a power that is at the crux of the alliances and international politics which shape the world and its future.”¹³ Britain's pivotal power did not come from being aligned with a particular country or alliance, but from being a part of the power centers that matter. Blair explained what he had in mind when he evoked Britain's pivotal role. He said: “[i]t means realizing once and for all that Britain does not have to choose between being strong with the US, or strong with Europe; it means having the confidence to see that Britain can be both. Indeed, that Britain must be both; that we are stronger with the US because of our strength in Europe; that we are stronger in Europe because of our strength with the US.”¹⁴

Britain's self-positioning as the uniting force behind the powerful has been the consensual view of both labor and conservative governments. Ernest Bevin before Churchill articulated how Britain is still a world power status by virtue of its ability to unite and influence the other powers: “[h]is Majesty's Government does not accept the view ... that we have ceased to be a Great Power, or the contention that we have ceased to play that role. We regard ourselves as one of the Powers most vital to the peace of the world and we will still have our historic part to play. The very fact that we have fought so hard for liberty, and paid such a price, warrants our retaining this position; and indeed it places a duty upon us to continue to retain it. I am not aware of any suggestion, seriously

¹³ *Ibid.* p.19.

¹⁴ Blair's speech on “Britain's role in the EU and the transatlantic alliance,” at the 150th anniversary of the Associated Press, London, 15th of December 1998, quoted in Rhiannon Vickers, “Labour's search for a Third Way in foreign policy, in Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones, eds., *New Labour's Foreign Policy*), p. 38.

advanced, that by a sudden stroke of fate, as it were, we have overnight ceased to be a Great Power.”¹⁵ This consensual view of Britain’s great power standing was the accepted wisdom in the mid 1950s via its image as the nucleus of three overlapping power centers. “Our enduring associations are within the Commonwealth, within the United States, and with the nations of Western Europe. ... We shall continue as a Great Power as, within associations we take the initiative, persuade our friends, and lead. Our resources, spiritual and material, must be strong that our friends will accept this from us and consult us in advance whenever they have an idea or want to act. ...”¹⁶

The architecture of overlapping alliances with Britain being at their centre and acting as the coordinating force behind them is almost identical to how Churchill described Britain’s great power status in 1948.¹⁷ In his address to a mass meeting in October 1948, he said: “[a]s I look out upon the future of our country in the changing scene of human destiny I feel the existence of three great circles among the free nations and democracies ... the first circle for us is naturally the British Commonwealth and Empire, with all that comprises. Then there is also the English-speaking world in which we, Canada and the British Dominions and the United States play so important a part. And finally there is a united Europe. These three majestic circles are co-existent and if they are linked together there is no force or combination which could overthrow them or even challenge them. Now if you think of the three interlinked circles you will see that we are the only country which has a great part in every one of them. We stand, in fact, at

¹⁵ Ernest Bevin, 16 May 1947, House of Commons Debates, quoted in Avi Shlaim, “Britain’s Quest for a World Role,” p. 839.

¹⁶ Sir Oliver Franks, as quoted in Harold and Margaret Sprout, “Retreat from World Power,” *World Politics*, Vol. XV, No. 3, July 1963, p. 677.

¹⁷ Richard Little, “Conclusions: the Ethics and the Strategy of Labour’s Third Way in Foreign Policy,” p. 257.

the very point of conjunction, and here in this island at the centre of the seaways and perhaps of airways also, we have the opportunity of joining them all together. If we rise to the occasion in the years that are to come it may be found that once again we hold the key to opening a safe and happy future to humanity and will gain for ourselves graces and fame.”¹⁸ Blair’s ‘pivot’ and Churchill’s ‘point of conjunction’ are articulations of the same belief about Britain’s potential as a leading power in the world. In both these images Britain is at the center of the important spheres of influence at the time, the Commonwealth, and the Western world after World War II, Europe and the U.S. in the post 9/11 era, which enables Britain to “coordinate”¹⁹ the actions of the important powers and, thus, gives her the potential to lead the world. This potential to lead from the centre, the centre being Britain, spurred by the fact that Britain holds the moral ground, is really the classic formulation of Britain’s role as a great power after the loss of the empire. Or, to put it more accurately, the self-positioning of an ethical Britain at the centre of the power centers at any given new world order, and its self-anointment as the moral leader of the other powerful nations *is* the substitute for the British empire.²⁰

There are certain core beliefs that inform this self-conception of Britain. First and foremost among them is the belief that Britain was a great power and will remain so because of the world role she is unequalled to play. Britain is uniquely situated to unite, organize, and lead the existing powerful circles because she is their nucleus. Britain is also inimitably able to lead these centers because of her traditionally skilful diplomacy and her capacity to act as a power broker. And Britain is supremely endowed to set the

¹⁸ Winston Churchill, *Europe Unites* (London: Cassell, 1950), p. 417-18.

¹⁹ Richard Little, “Conclusions: the Ethics and the Strategy of Labour’s Third Way in Foreign Policy,” p. 257.

²⁰ Avi Shlaim, “Britain’s Quest for a World Role,” *International Relations*, Vol. V, No.1, 1975, pp. 839, 840.

uniting goals because of her principled predisposition, which translated in promoting liberty in the immediate post world War II era, and human rights in the post 9/11 period. The irony of this self-conception is that is the antithesis to the more common characterization of Britain as the country that has relied on the tactic of ‘divide and rule.’ It seems that when it comes to dealing with powerful nations, Britain resorts to the notion of ‘unite and lead.’

The influence of this image of a global power, as opposed to that of a regional power, is manifested in all aspects of British foreign policy. It asserts that in the post-imperial era British interests are “distinct” from the existing power structure and powers. Britain has interests that transcend the regional focus of NATO, Suez being such an example. The decision in 1957 to make an independent nuclear striking force the cornerstone of Britain’s military policy, while no British government was able to finance British delivery systems, was also an attempt to boost the credentials of its great power status.²¹ As one scholar put it, it was unthinkable that a great power like Britain would not have the bomb, despite the fact that the country was literally bankrupt.²² Ever since, British experts and politicians have been hotly debating whether the small number of British nuclear warheads mounted on American delivery systems did anything to bolster British prestige. What is telling of course here is that these experts were not debating the credibility of their nuclear deterrence, but rather whether it was effective as a status symbol.²³

The same preoccupation with the great power image has enveloped the

²¹ Harold and Margaret Sprout, “Retreat from World Power,” pp. 669-673; Avi Shlaim, “Britain’s Quest for a World Role,” p. 842.

²² Avi Shlaim, “Britain’s Quest for a World Role,” p. 838.

²³ Harold and Margaret Sprout, “Retreat from World Power,” p. 672.

discussions about EEC membership. In the late 1950s, Europe did not appear to be the “vehicle on which Britain might rise to the new order of magnitude and the new level of sovereignty which the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. had established.”²⁴ Only the dissipation of one of the three interlocking circles in the early 1960s, the Commonwealth, highlighted the potential of another power circle, the EEC. But Britain’s stance towards the EEC, and later the EU also shows how Britain insists that she is not just another European country, and thus cannot fully commit herself to the EU.²⁵ Britain’s non-Europeanness and her interests beyond Europe proper are interrelated. They both affirm that Britain has a special role in world politics, what Blair now calls a pivotal role.

THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN GREATNESS ABROAD AND THE MORAL CRUSADE AT HOME

So, Blair’s vision about Britain’s influence in the world is not novel neither in its scope nor in its situating Britain as the centre of geostrategic spheres. But what gives content and purpose to this perpetual search for greatness and influence in the post-cold war era is how Britain has come to define its secular morality under the novel conditions of globalization. It is this interplay between the home grown moralism and the country’s imaginary positioning abroad that has made the war against Iraq a possibility. It was at the center of the European and American power circles that Blair positioned Britain on July 17th, 2003, in his address to a joint session of Congress, and it was once again the role of the honest broker that he reserved for his country, as Churchill and later Macmillan had done before him. Blair said: “I believe any alliance must start with

²⁴ Woodhouse, *British Foreign Policy*, pp. 225-226.

²⁵ Robert Gray, “The Falklands Factor,” in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, eds, *The Politics of Thatcherism*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983), p. 276.

American and Europe. If Europe and America are together, the others will work with us. If we split, the rest will play around, play us off, and nothing but mischief will be the result of it.”²⁶ And as an honest broker between these two homocentric spheres, Blair gingerly pointed out that the American side of this international alliance had to show that this is a “partnership, built on persuasion, not command.”²⁷ As for the ultimate goal of the war, Blair argued that it is to restore the “inalienable right of humankind ... to be free ...” because, he said, military power alone could not defeat terrorism. But “liberty ... for all,” could.²⁸ The rights of the individual, state intervention to restore them, and the bankruptcy of existing institutions in alleviating people from decadence and dependency were leading the moral crusade at home. Blair envisioned delivering these same rights to people in other countries when he argued that “the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe,” and he advocated that national borders should not be an impediment to such a moral abroad.

II

“THE RIGHTS WE ENJOY REFLECT THE DUTIES WE OWE”: BRITAIN’S MORAL CRUSADE AT HOME UNDER BLAIR

My causal mechanism requires that we first look at the economic environment inside and outside Britain in order to ascertain what specific economic interests brought about the redefinition of the British moral codes under Blair. This where I turn next.

²⁶ Excerpts from Blair’s speech, *The New York Times*, July 18th, 2003, p. A8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, A8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, A8.

THE ECONOMIC PRESCRIPTIONS OF POST-FORDISM

From the end of WWII to, roughly, the beginning of the 1980s the most salient, and also similar, mode of capitalist production in Western liberal capitalist democracies has been Fordism. Britain's economic development during the same period followed the same route. The Fordist mode of production in Britain, as in the other capitalist democracies, created the taste and the need for mass consumption and, thus, mass production, and was accompanied by mass public provisions of welfare benefits and modernity in culture. By the beginning of the 1980s, Post-Fordism took over as the next stage of capitalist development. The post-Fordism mode of production brought with it the notion of flexible production, created the taste for different consumption patterns by different societal groups, made necessary a restructured welfare state, and brought along postmodernist cultural trends.²⁹ Post-Fordism in essence is another re-structuring of the capitalist economy whereby, to put it simply, corporations find themselves operating in a globalized economic space. This new stage of capitalist evolution started affecting western capitalist economies during the mid-1970s onwards when signs of increasing unemployment and inflation started becoming more permanent.

The most perfect embodiment of the Fordist mode of capitalist accumulation was the post-WWII Keynesian welfare state, of which the British Keynesian state is a near perfect example. Fordism reflected the socioeconomic balance struck between capital, the state, and the citizens of these nations. The Keynesian welfare state complemented the Fordist economic model and, thus, helped sustain it. Under Fordism the understanding

²⁹ Roger Burrows and Brian Loader, eds., *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State?* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 1.

was that the national economy would be regulated through the national state as an economic space distinct from the international. Another understanding was that the national economic prosperity would be based on an expanding national production and consumption.³⁰ The Keynesian welfare state was expected to secure full, meaning life-long, employment to the citizens of the western nation-states whose economies at the time were predominantly operating within these national borders. More specifically, the economic part of the post-war social consensus in the capitalist liberal democracies was based on an interventionist state whose primary economic role was to manage the demand side of the national economy so that the generalized norms of mass consumption could continue.³¹ The expectation was that economic growth would continue and prices would remain relatively stable. Also, under these economic conditions a sound balance of payments could be secured and social welfare would be available to meet the needs of those who were economically dislocated. This nationally oriented focus of the Keynesian state and Fordism was further aided by the international economic regimes that were created after WWII whose main objective to restore economic stability to these national economies.³²

Since the 1980s, this Keynesian welfare state within the Atlantic-Fordism context has undergone major structural restructuring due to the “denationalization, destatization

³⁰ Bob Jessop, “Narrating the Future of the National Economy and the National State,” in *State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn*, George Steinmetz, ed., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 383.

³¹ Bob Jessop, “The Transition to post-Fordism and the Schumpeterian Workfare State,” in Roger Burrows and Brian Loader, eds., *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State?* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 26.

³² Bob Jessop, “From the KWNS to the SWPR,” in *Rethinking Social Policy Rethinking Social Policy*, Gail Lewis, Sharon Gewirtz, and John Clarke, eds., (London: Sage, 2000), p. 381.

and internationalization”³³ of these previously rather closed national economies. The factors that destabilized the Keynesian state varied from economic to political and social. The most obvious economic factors were the increasing opening of the national economies, the unencumbered flow of finance capital, the challenges coming from the export-oriented East-Asian economies with a lower –waged working force, as well as the feminization of the national workforce and the contradictory demands of this development on welfare provisions.³⁴ In the post-Fordist economic phase corporations move away from economies of scale, adopt the new managerial economic model, and are becoming oriented towards more specialized consumer goods that offer higher quality and need more specific needs. Those of them that can transcend the national territorial space form partnerships with corporations abroad as well as at their local level. As a result, the state gets more involved with the internationalization of the national economy in an effort to shield the domestic scene from the detrimental outcomes of the globalization of the economy. Also, the state is invested in supporting the globalization of the economy as the only visible way of bringing the much needed economic recovery at home and, thus, securing the legitimacy of the national state in the eyes of their constituents.³⁵

One of the characteristics of the end of the Keynesian state in Britain under the post-Fordist regime is a change from the belief that workers have rights which are met, and guaranteed, by the welfare provision to a new understanding of what constitutes the

³³ Bob Jessop, “Narrating the Future of the National Economy and the National State,” in *State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn*, George Steinmetz, ed., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 381.

³⁴ Bob Jessop, “From the KWNS to the SWPR,” in *Rethinking Social Policy*, Gail Lewis, Sharon Gewirtz, and John Clarke, eds., (London: Sage, 2000), p. 176.

³⁵ Bob Jessop, “The Transition to post-Fordism and the Schumpeterian Welfare State,” in Roger Burrows and Brian Loader, eds., *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State?* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 26.

new post-Fordist British workforce (under what Jessop calls the Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime, SWPR). Under post-Fordism, the traditional understanding of citizens as those worker-citizens with universal rights within their national territory ceases to exist. This new British workforce operates in a “workfarist model” which is based on the “*obligations* of workers of worker-citizens qua workers to support themselves as far as possible through their integration into the labour force and other markets.”³⁶ Another trend, among many more, is the notion that the needs of this ‘new’ workforce and the benefits they deserve are now linked to the demands of labor market flexibility and economic competitiveness.

As we can see, these economic effects of the globalization of the economy on the British society are tied not only with the retrenchment of the welfare state but also with the rearrangement of the state – society relationship on the new principle of reciprocity, with the latter touching upon the redefinition of citizenry in 21st century Britain. But how salient is the issue of globalization in the British political discourse in early 2000s? To get a glimpse of the extent to which the issue of globalization features in the public debates in Britain, I turn next to the language of the Labour party during this period.

THE LANGUAGE OF GLOBALIZATION IN NEW LABOUR’S DISCOURSE

New Labour’s language is replete with declarations not only about the effects of globalization on the British economy and society but, most importantly, of its inevitability and the sense of urgency with which appropriate socioeconomic changes

³⁶ Bob Jessop, “From the KWNS to the SWPR,” in *Rethinking Social Policy*, Gail Lewis, Sharon Gewirtz, and John Clarke, eds., (London: Sage, 2000), p. 174, (*italics in original*). It is important here to note how the definition of citizenship is under flux due to this redefinition of what constitutes the current British labor force.

need to be enacted at home. New Labour accepts new international economic liberalism as an inevitable and unquestionable fact of life which should guide politics at home.³⁷ In the language of New Labour ‘globalization and the ‘new global economy’ are represented as accomplished facts, and ‘change’ towards globalization is represented as unavoidable. Echoing some of the language about the ensuing changes from the adoption of neoliberal economic policies used by Thatcher, New Labour’s talks about globalization as a necessary change that is also natural, acts as a defensive mechanism against other hostile economic forces abroad, is a source of energy for rejuvenating the British society and economy, can have a transformative effect, but will bring along great uncertainty and turbulence.³⁸

In this globalizing economy, the government has no other option other than deregulating the labor market and restructuring the welfare according to new demands for international competitiveness, among other things, in order for Britain to be able to compete. “The key to new Labour economics is the recognition that ... [has] to compete in an increasingly international market place . . . Today’s Labour Party, new Labour, is the political embodiment of the changed world – the new challenges, the new policies and the new politics.”³⁹ In a similar vein, Blair explained why change was necessary: “there are three obvious changes in the post-war world” which necessitate the renovation of politics as we know them, and the most important is the fact “that the economy is global.”⁴⁰ And Robin Cook argued that “[b]ecause the world is changing fast and the

³⁷ Norman Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?* (London; Routledge, 2000), p. 15; Colin Hay and Matthew Watson, “Diminishing Expectations: The Strategic Discourse of Globalization in the Political Economy of New Labour,” in *Fortress Europe*, forthcoming, ch. 6.

³⁸ ³⁸ John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), pp.39-46.

³⁹ Tony Blair, Speech at the BDI Annual Conference, Bonn, June 18, 1996.

⁴⁰ Tony Blair, “Socialism”, (Fabian Society Pamphlet, 1994).

economy is becoming even more global ... yesterday's solutions will not work for tomorrow."⁴¹ There is a plethora of statements, similar to the ones already cited, by the New Labour members as to the inevitability of the globalization of the national economies and that Britain, if it were to remain competitive, had to change course even under a Labor government. The crucial question is, how does the language of globalization and the important types of social restructuring that follow it become accepted by the majority of the British people? I argue, and I try to show in the following section, that the inevitability of the social re-engineering under New Labour becomes accepted via the redefinition of what constitutes a 'good' and 'moral' Briton. Next, I will look at one site where this redefinition of the noble Briton, and by extension modern day Britishness, gets contested and accepted.

MORALITY IN WELFARE REFORM

I argue that the restructuring of the welfare state is a site where New Labour's commitment to globalization and the post-Fordist state is being put into practice. The ideology on which the welfare state is being remodeled reflects the demands of the globalization of the national economies. These post-industrial, post-Fordist economic demands have made neoliberal economies acceptable in most of the Western world in the 1980s. As a consequence, since the early 1990s the Western world has been experiencing a crisis of their welfare systems.⁴² The British state under Blair has dealt with its own welfare crisis as follows: with the continuation of the retrenchment of the post-war welfare state that started under Thatcher; with the application of market forces both to the

⁴¹ Robin Cook, Speech to the Institute of European Affairs, Nov. 3, 1997.

⁴² Roger Burrows and Brian Loader, eds., *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State?* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. xi.

organization of welfare apparatus and the distribution of entitlements; with the abandonment of some key principles of the post-war social consensus was, like the expectation of life-time employment to which some welfare entitlements have been responding since 1945; with the acceptance of the near consensual view in the country that comprehensive welfare is partially responsible for Britain's economic decline; and with the equation of welfare receivership with moral degeneration. I argue that all these are practical manifestations of how the post-Fordist economic environment is being experienced by everyday Britons via one of the most "British" public institutions, the welfare state. There are some very recognizable ways in which the retrenchment of the British welfare state parallels, better still almost mimics, the post-Fordist articulation of the free market: we see the introduction of 'mixed economies' in the production and delivery of welfare services, with an increased role for the private sector, with different forms of 'outsourcing' taking place, and new forms of 'partnerships' between the state, non-profits, commercial contractors, informal networks, and independent agencies; we see the restructuring of the labor force; we witness a rise of contracting; and we also see the emergence of different relationships between the central, and local, and regional governments.⁴³

These structural and institutional changes were possible because of the new beliefs about the best way to deal with the welfare crisis. These beliefs, or organizational ideologies, were directly borrowed from the post-Fordist market place, the same way that the structural changes of the welfare state mirrored the restructuring of the national economies according to the demands of globalization. Prominent among these new

⁴³ John Clarke, Allan Cochrane, and Eugene McLaughlin, eds., *Managing Social Policy*, (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 2-3.

beliefs is that of managerialism, or new public management, according to which the British citizens, as recipients of welfare benefits, are being redefined as customers or users with distinct and specialized needs and obligations. Another key feature of managerialism is the glorification of the manager and his portrayal as “heroic” and “bold.”⁴⁴ There is a strong parallel between the narrative of the courageous manager of the welfare state who can inspire and lead the workforce to more efficient levels of production and the way in which Blair portrays himself as a courageous and strong manager of the international community. In its completion, this paper will spell out more of these new organizational ideologies, for example the very important narratives of efficiency and flexibility, and then show how they are also replicated in the language used by the Blair administration to talk about its ‘third way’ in foreign policy. But for this version of the paper, I only concentrate on how the ‘good’ and ‘moral’ Briton is used in order to normalize the new economic demands of the post-Fordist economy on the British citizen, via the institution of welfare, and how through this practice of normalization and legitimization of the ‘moral’ Briton we can understand Britain’s moral crusade abroad.

More precisely, I argue that welfare reform is the vehicle through which New Labour is redefining the state – society relationship according to the prescriptions of the global neoliberal economy. Welfare restructuring is one of the ways, but certainly not the only one, in which New Labour is redefining the rights and duties of British citizens vis a vis the government in accordance with the needs of the post-industrial capitalist economic development. This redefinition of the state-citizen relationship becomes legitimate, and thus acceptable, because New Labour’s new moral codes about what

⁴⁴ John Clarke, Allan Cochrane, and Eugene McLaughlin, eds., *Managing Social Policy*, (London: Sage, 1994), p. 3.

constitutes a 'good Briton' are persuasive. Welfare reform is just one site where this redefinition of the 'moral Briton' is taking place.

I argue that the post-Keynesian welfare state is an important social location for the contestation of the identity of the 'good Briton' and the identity of Britishness more generally for at least two reasons. First, the Keynesian welfare state 'as we know it' has been a very recognizable part of the post World War II Britain and, most importantly, post-imperial British national experience. As the British Empire after WWII could no longer convey the old meanings of power and economic profit, its only remaining characteristic, that of civilization, was carried on with the evolution of the post-war welfare state. The welfare state not only seemed to maintain the sense of national unity and cohesion but it was also regarded as everything that was "best and British."⁴⁵ Its substantial remodeling therefore is quite consequential for at least some parts of the English society. Secondly, the creation of the Keynesian welfare state has been the consensual production of a whole range of social agreements.⁴⁶ These arrangements were the result of "the relationship between the state, the economy, civil society and the public sphere that was to emerge and become insitutionalised in post-war Britain."⁴⁷ To see this expansive social edifice, in the form of NHS, public housing, social security, education, etc, of which the British people were proud and with which a great number of them identified, being redone without a great deal of contestation attests to the fact that how it is being reconstructed is quite acceptable by the majority of the British people.

⁴⁵ Fiona Williams, "Gender, Race, and Class in British Welfare Policy," ch. 4 in Allan Cochrane and John Clarke, ed., *Comparing Welfare States: Britain in International Context*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 85.

⁴⁶ John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 1.

⁴⁷ Hay, A.C., *Re-stating Social and Political Change*, (Buckingham: Open University, 1996), p. 44.

More specifically, it has been argued that the post-WWII welfare settlement was not only a politico-economic arrangement but that it was also formed at the “intersection of family, work, and nation.”⁴⁸ The different social changes that took place after 1945 and their interaction with each, for example the end to the male-worker image, immigration, the promise of full employment, were incorporated in the British national identity under an “assumed white British citizenry.”⁴⁹ At the same time, the creation of the Keynesian welfare state was predicated on the concept of offering welfare benefits to all British citizens with the expectation that the assimilation of the immigrant population would be unproblematic. But as the population in Britain became more visibly multi-ethnic, the white conception of citizenry could no longer be sustained. Nearly concurrently, the economic cost of the welfare state, and the interventionist state, were becoming an anathema to neoliberal economic policies and the constituents who supported them. So, it can be argued that the dismantlement of the welfare state touches upon conceptions of race and gender as well as evolving understandings of Empire.⁵⁰

In this section, I will look at some of the language regarding welfare reform in order to see what is the content of the changes that the Blair government is advancing. I expect that the changes that the state imposes on the recipients of welfare services are

⁴⁸ John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 9; Allan Cochrane and John Clarke, ed., *Comparing Welfare States: Britain in International Context*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993), ch.2.

⁴⁹ John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 9;

⁵⁰ John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 9; Fiona Williams, “Gender, Race, and Class in British Welfare Policy,” ch. 4 in Allan Cochrane and John Clarke, ed., *Comparing Welfare States: Britain in International Context*, (London: Sage Publications, 1993);

Another reason for focusing on welfare reform has to do with the inductive method of recovering a country’s identity. Most of the secondary literature on Britain from the mid-1990s onwards was making a point about how important welfare reform has been for the life of the British nation. In this sense, focusing on welfare reform was not a matter of choice; it was mostly a matter of following the lead of the secondary literature on politics, social change, and economic development in Britain during the Thatcher and the Blair years.

promoting a new meaning of secular morality, a new sense of what is right and wrong. As a result, what gets to be redefined is the content of what constitutes a 'good' Briton in the post-Thatcher era and, by extension, the content of Britishness in the Blair era.

Looking at Green Paper on Welfare reform, "New Ambitions for Our Country: A New Contract for Welfare," which was published in March 1998, it becomes evident that New Labour inextricably ties welfare reform to paid work. In the opening paragraph of chapter three, "The importance to work" the document reads: "The government aims to rebuild the welfare state around work. The skills and energies of the workforce are the UK's biggest economic asset. And for both individuals and families, paid work is the most secure means of averting poverty and dependency, except, of course, for those who are retired or so sick or disabled or so heavily engaged in caring activities, that they cannot realistically support themselves." And as the first principle out of a total of eight in the Green paper suggests, "[t]he new welfare state should help and encourage people of working age to work where they are capable of doing so."⁵¹ If urging people to work and get off welfare might not strike someone as novel, especially in an era of neoliberal economic policies, it is still very significant how paid work is the most essential aspect of a Labour government's welfare reform.⁵² Even more important why the government insists that paid work should be the most important organizing principle of welfare reform. In the Green paper the government's reasoning is explained very clearly: "[t]he Government's biggest investment since taking office has been in a large-scale welfare to work programme. Our ambition is nothing less than a change of culture among benefit

⁵¹ *A New Contract for Welfare*, London, HMSO, 1998; Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 132-135.

⁵² Alan Deacon, "The Green Paper on Welfare Reform: A Case for Enlightened Self-interest?" *The Political Quarterly Publishing*, 1998, p. 306

claimants, employers, and public servants – with rights and responsibilities on all sides.”⁵³ Again one could argue that making a normative argument in support of welfare change is to be expected. But what is significant for the case here is the manner in which the government expects the moral regeneration of the British society through welfare reform to be accomplished. According to the Green Paper this moral regeneration is going to be achieved by finding the proper balance between the rights that individuals have in the society and their duties and obligations back to their community. As argued “at its heart, ... the Green Paper is an attempt to foster a greater sense of mutual obligation [,]”⁵⁴ between the individual and the community. The most important concept on which the recommendations of the Green Paper are based is that of ‘enlightened self-interest,’ and not that of the near absolute ‘self-interest’ advocated and promoted under the previous Thatcher administrations. The most important foundational element of the new welfare state, according to New Labour, is the reciprocal obligations between the individual and the society. To the extent that the average British citizen accepts this redefinition of what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ behavior vis a vis the British society as it appears in the Green Paper, we can argue that the ‘good’ and ‘moral’ Briton has been, first, redefined and, secondly, normalized through the practiced everyday reality of what constitutes welfare rights and what type of behavior entitles people to them. In this sense, as the retrenchment of the welfare state is being experienced by the average British citizen, either as a recipient or as an observer, and probably quiet or vocal supporter of its remodeling, at the same time he/she is being socialized to a new set of values as to what is an acceptable behavior on behalf of the British citizen and who is entitled to what. The

⁵³ *A New Contract for Welfare*, London, HMSO, 1998, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Alan Deacon, “The Green Paper on Welfare Reform: A Case for Enlightened Self-interest?” *The Political Quarterly Publishing*, 1998, p. 310.

end result of the normalization of the present day ‘moral’ and ‘good’ Britain through how she experiences the institution of welfare is the notion that the ‘good’ and ‘moral’ Britain under Blair is the one who is courageous to act according to his/her ‘enlightened self-interest’ and, thus, give back to the community in equal value and magnitude what she has received from it.

NEW LABOUR’S THIRD WAY: COMMUNITY AND MORALITY IN NEW LABOUR’S DISCOURSE

There is a striking congruence between the language of the Green Paper and the language used by Blair and members of New Labour. In 1995, speaking as the leader of the Labour party Tony Blair used perhaps the most recognizable aspect of the post-World war II Keynesian state, the creation of the welfare state, to launch his new vision about Britain. He reminded the audience that the welfare state started 50 years ago when the then Labour government of Attlee created the foundations for the National Health Service and the National Insurance, and inaugurated the commitment to full employment.⁵⁵ These social policies were part of the social pact between the British society, economic interests, and the British governments in the post WWII era and had become part of the fabric of the British public’s life. Now, in 1995 Blair argued that the times have changed so irrevocably from the familiar 1945 that the country itself had to change as well. This meant that the post WWII Keynesian settlement was not only out of sink with recent economic developments domestically and internationally, but in reality it was

⁵⁵ Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), p. 74.

handicapping the country from reaching its true potential. Blair argued that “we need a new settlement on welfare for a new age, where opportunity and responsibility go together.” And he was more specific about the direction in which he would like to lead the country if given the chance; he said the social policies of Labour “should and will cross the old boundaries between left and right, progressive and conservative.”⁵⁶

The post 1945 welfare state was a social compromise between state, society, and the capitalist economy that meant to legitimize of a social order that could otherwise have been undermined by some of the negative effects of the capitalist economy, like poverty and inequality, especially on the working class. This social policy consensus was predicated on certain understandings about the role of the welfare state and that of the individuals. Those understandings were that access to welfare was based on needs as was be the distribution of benefits. In this sense, all citizens had the right to enjoy at least some share of the wealth of the society based on their need.⁵⁷

Whether one sees *New Labour* as the post-Thatcherite Labour party⁵⁸ or as a modernized version of the Labour, there is little disagreement either in the party or by commentators outside it, that by abandoning the concept of nationalization, by endorsing the idea of reforming the trade unions, and by accepting the free market New Labour was responding to the new economic realities of globalization. Such reorientation in scope and vision followed a reorientation of Labour’s moral code. Even before Blair’s New Labour, Old Labour under Neil Kinnock and John Smith was abandoning its most self-

⁵⁶ Tony Blair, *Let Us Face the Future: The 1945 Anniversary Lecture* (London: Fabian Society, 1995), p. 2, 14.

⁵⁷ Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), p. 79-80. Some social democrats like T. H. Marshall argued that the universality of welfare rights appears to added the last piece to modern citizenship which first started with equality before and the law and later included equality before the ballot box. Same, p. 79.

⁵⁸ Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), p. 1.

defining goals to scale back the market in favor of state ownership, to promote government planning, and to contain the exploitative market forces by strengthening the labor unions. By 1994, under the guidance of prominent labour modernizers like Giles Radice, the party was not adopting the values, interests, and convictions of its traditional labour base, the working class and the country's poor, but of the "Middle Englanders," the white collar and skilled workers who since 1979 had provided the Conservatives with their uninterrupted support, and electoral victories.⁵⁹ For the Labour party, and its now expanded/target constituency, the market economy was no longer considered immoral, individualism was sanctioned as morally acceptable behavior that tramped the ethos of community solidarity, and the concept of equality was divorced from equality of outcomes and tied now to equality of opportunity. As Giles suggested in 1994: "[t]o be credible, the basic core of Labour's ideas – community, fairness and opportunity – has to be clearly linked to a few key policies such as crime, education, employment and health. Labour has to demonstrate its economic competence by continuing to emphasize the need to control public spending and to ensure value for money. The new Labour leadership needs to show that it is building on the reforms introduced by Neil Kinnock and John Smith. A revision of Clause Four [of the Labour party's constitution] would provide a symbol that the Labour Party has really changed and is self confident enough to put forward a vision of the future."⁶⁰

New Labour's philosophy, inspired by communitarianism, successfully encapsulated in Blair's public speeches, sees the community as the repository of moral

⁵⁹ Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), pp. 24-26.

⁶⁰ Giles Radice and Stephen Pollard, *Any Southern Comfort?* (London: Fabian Society, 1994), p. 16; Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), p. 25.

principles and the site where individuals attain a meaningful existence. According to this view, the individual cannot be constituted outside the society, the same way that the moral purpose of the society cannot be attained independently of the actions of the individuals. In this mutually constituted social environment individuals can expect to receive incentives from the society for their self-improvement as long as they assume the duty to give back to the community in terms of services and morally acceptable behavior. A good society is indispensable to building good citizens as much as good citizens are necessary for sustaining a good society. In this sense, both the society and its members are equally responsible towards each other for their betterment, social advancement, and economic success. And here is where New Labour's understanding of society differs from that of the conservative party and Thatcher's neoliberal philosophy. The latter elevates individualism, self-propelment, and individual accomplishment to the single most important and acceptable concepts and worth-attaining goals, and sees society and its institutions, at best, as playing a minimum role in people's drive to self-fulfillment and, at worst, as intrusive and potentially destructive. In this sense, individuals have duties mostly, if not exclusively, to themselves but not to the society.

But Blair's in his speech "Faith in the City, Ten Years On," at the Southwark Cathedral in 1996, argues for a different citizen-society relation. In his speech he typified this novel understanding of the interdependence between the society and the individual and the co-production of a good society. He argued: "... I start from a simple belief that people are not separate economic actors competing in the market place of life. They are citizens of a community. We are social beings, nurtured in families and communities and

human only because we develop the moral power of personal responsibility for ourselves and each other. Britain is stronger as a team than as a collection of selfish players.”⁶¹

According to this communitarian view of Britain and Britishness society and citizens relate and interact with each other through a system of obligations, duties, responsibilities, and rights which are conferred upon the citizens through their various identities, for example as parents, employees, employers, tax-payers. In the same manner, the society equally partakes in this social arrangement of mutual rights and obligations by assuming the responsibility to sustain the cohesiveness and communal feeling of the society. It does so primarily through state institutions, for example welfare state, family legislation, where the responsibilities, rights, and obligations of individuals are codified. Putting in practice this communitarian idea amounts to crafting a contract between the society and the people based on rights and responsibilities. As Blair explained in his January 1996 speech: “[w]e must create a society based on a notion of mutual rights and responsibilities, on what is actually a modern notion of social justice – something for something. We accept our duty as a society to give each person a stake in its future. And in return, each person accepts responsibility to respond.”⁶²

Blair also made clear the difference between the Conservative understanding of society and that of the New Labour. In his 1995 Spectator lecture he said that neo-liberalism created a culture where individualism reigned supreme at the expense of shared values and duties towards the society. As a result, the British society appeared to lack any sense of common purpose which produces an ill-adjusted and irresponsible

⁶¹ Tony Blair, “Faith in the City-Ten Years On,” speech in Southwark Cathedral, January 29, 1996. Giles Radice and Stephen Pollard, *Any Southern Comfort?* (London: Fabian Society, 1994), p. 16; Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 28.

⁶² Tony Blair, “Faith in the City-Ten Years On,” speech in Southwark Cathedral, January 29, 1996.

citizenry.⁶³ He said that "... the Right started to define personal responsibility as responsibility not just for yourself but to yourself. ... It became narrowly acquisitive and rather destructive. The economic message of enterprise – of the early 1980s – became a philosophy of 'get what you can'."⁶⁴ And he added that "[t]he only way to rebuild social order and stability is through strong values, socially shared, inculcated through individuals, family, government and the institutions of civil society."⁶⁵ In essence, the 'moral' and 'good' Briton under Blair is someone who accepts the communitarian values. She is a Briton who cannot see herself outside her community not only theoretically but also practically. She is someone who acknowledges the duty to give back what she herself is enjoying. This secular morality underscores how Britishness is perceived at present.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I argue that we cannot adequately explain Britain's foreign policy under New Labour after 1997, and the decision to wage war against Iraq, without looking at how the country's secular morality and economic interests have reshaped present day Britishness. I argue that New Labour's vision of the United Kingdom as a great power with a moral purpose abroad reflects the new moral values of the British public as these evolved just before and during the Blair years. In addition, the British view of itself as the intermediary between the American and European power centers explains the country's

⁶³ Stephen Driver and Luke Martell, *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*, (Cambridge; Polity Press, 1998), p. 29.

⁶⁴ Blair Tony, "The Rights We Enjoy Reflect the Duties We Owe," *The Spectator*, March 22, 1995.

⁶⁵ Blair Tony, "The Rights We Enjoy Reflect the Duties We Owe," *The Spectator*, March 22, 1995.

attempts to broker a deal between the diverging foreign policies of the U.S. and Europe over Iraq at the United Nations. It also explains why probably New Labour sees its recent policy towards Iraq as an attempt towards multilateralism, and not as a nod to unilateralism. I also argue that even though some of the economic restructuring that Britain is experiencing under the New Labour is not antithetical to the market reforms introduced by Thatcher, the moral codes introduced by the New Labour are. In this regard, I am suggesting that Britishness under Thatcher, with its corresponding, and different, secular morality, would not have portrayed the war against Iraq as necessary.