The Present and the Future: Issues Surrounding the Concepts of 'Culture' and the 'Nation-State'

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ABSTRACT

Scientific fiction has long been analyzed in relation to environmental and biotechnological issues, and urban futurology, but this research attempts to use it to explore globalization and the concept of the nation state. This has been explored primarily through a literature review of current issues relating to global culture and the nation state, and science fiction texts have been used to highlight areas of interest. Aside from opening up the discussion and highlighting the usefulness of using science fiction novels in this context, a key argument is that a restricted world government of a particular form will be required if humans are to remain sufficiently unified in the future, but significant effort must be made to ensure that our unique identities are not harmed at each spatial scale.

Keywords: Environmental, Globalization, Nation State, Urban Futurology.

INTRODUCTION

The principal aim of this dissertation is to forward the case for a world government with restricted powers. This government would have the ability to address global concerns which require an international perspective and cooperation, but would be limited in its ability to alter culture at lower spatial scales. In order to ascertain exactly how this government should be formed, and its structure, it would be necessary to do far more research than I am currently able to do. However, it is important to begin to analyze the issue and come up with meaningful ideas as to possible solutions.

In order to do this my objectives are to review literature relating to globalization and culture and globalization and the nation state. This has been done in order to provide an understanding of the present situation and provide a framework for predictions of the future. I will then attempt to define science fiction before providing examples of its use in academic work. My methodology will then be outlined, and finally conceptions of the future are discussed through the use of a number of science fiction novels. These are used to provide a variety of opinions as to the direction in which humanity is heading, and also to suggest how culture and the concept of the nation state may be affected by future technology. Finally, I will conclude and suggest possible recommendations for further research.

BACKGROUND

The issue of a 'global culture' has long been discussed among academic writers. It is my attempt in this piece of work to explore a variety of cultural issues in the context of cultural theories (cultural homogenization and cultural hybridity), and to then, using novellas and articles written by a few of the leading names in science-fiction, consider how the proposed effects of these theories are being portrayed in the future. This is, of course, a complex and largely hypothetical analysis, but it provides a starting point for looking well beyond the present state of affairs in the hope of discovering what the future of humanity may be like.

Similarly, I will explore the concept of the nation-state and globalization in the present, before continuing to see how portrayals of future communities line up alongside the current situation, as I see it. Culture and the nation-state are both important concepts in the modern age of globalization and so, since I am also looking at the picture in the long-term, I believe it would be foolhardy to write about one without fully considering the effects that another concept will have.

It is, of course, a difficult task to compare and reunite academic and fictional works and so I have attempted to place them in different sections in order to clarify the distinction. What I have done, however, is only a small part in relation to what could be done in this area. In a sense this piece of work, therefore, is merely an introduction of what could be done if we look to the longer-term in seeing what could happen to our societies, our cultures, and our perception of nation-states. Apart from my research of academic literature regarding 'culture' and the 'nation-state' in the present,

for the future I have searched for and read as many science-fiction books, by a variety of leading authors, as time allowed, in order to provide a range of visions. By this, I also hope to show that the issues that involve us as academics are also being considered, albeit often indirectly and without using technical language, by authors and, in this example, science-fiction authors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part 1. Culture – The Present

"The initial problem with the concept of a 'global culture' is one of the meaning of terms. Can we speak of 'culture' in the singular? If by 'culture' is meant a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values and symbols, then we can only speak of cultures, never just culture; for a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, etc., presupposes different modes and repertoires in a universe of modes and repertoires. Hence, the idea of a 'global culture' is a practical impossibility, except in interplanetary terms" [1]. This is useful – 'interplanetary terms' will be discussed later - but nevertheless there have been attempts to define what a global culture may consist of.

[2] argues that a global culture should be viewed as "...cultural integration and cultural disintegration processes which take place not only on an inter-state level but processes which transcend the state-society unit and can therefore be held to occur on a trans-national or trans-societal level". This implies that there is more to global culture than homogenization and integration, and follows the view of [3] in that, "...the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meaning as well as a flow of people and goods." This is expected to result in cultural hybridity: "In a variety of ways, this approach emphasizes cross-cultural borrowings and inter-cultural fusion and blending to create hybridized or mixed cultural forms. All this somehow occurs in a world where Coca-Colonization or global capitalism is an ever-present but not all-determining force, and where nationalism, ethnicity, or some other kind of quasi-tribal affiliation is not the exclusive source of cultural identity" [4].

It is probably fair to say that the most widely-debated, and contested, theory in this context is cultural imperialism (associated with cultural homogenization). According to Tomlinson [5] "This theory emerged in the 1960s as part of a Marxist critique of advanced capitalist cultures, including their emphasis on consumerism and mass communications. Building on ideas from world-systems theory, the theory argues that the global economic system is dominated by a core of advanced countries while Third World countries remain at the periphery of the system with little control over their economic and political development." He goes on to say that trans-national corporations are key actors in the system and that it is associated with the homogenization of culture. The issue, therefore, is whether the notion of a global culture is one of networks and flows or increasing homogenization.

In order to answer the above question, it is initially necessary to discover what are believed to form 'a global culture'. This is not as easy as it may first appear to be. For example, Mackay H [6] points out that, "Although the globalization of culture seems in some ways obvious in our daily lives, it is not an entirely straightforward matter. Culture is a complicated and pervasive phenomenon, taking many forms." That being said, there are a few forms of culture that are frequently debated in academic literature as constituting an alleged global culture. These include the globalization of consumer culture (associated with the growth in trade of cultural goods), the growth of the Internet, the media, and advertising. As a whole they are often associated with Westernization and cultural homogenization and/or imperialism. Although, as will be shown below, certain aspects of culture are becoming increasingly global and homogenized, that does not mean to say there will be one single culture, at least in the wide definition of the term, embracing everyone on earth.

Many proponents of cultural imperialism hold the mass media to be one of the main driving forces behind cultural homogenization. One example of this relates to the dominance of the American film industry. "The newly developing global media are dominated by three or four-dozen large transnational corporations, with "fewer than ten mostly U.S.-based media conglomerates towering over the global market" [7]. This implies that the expansion of capitalism into the global sphere has also increased the volume of cultural goods through monopolization in production and distribution" [8]. As early as 1977, Boyd-Barrett pointed out that, "The increasing movement of Hollywood films across cultural spaces has emerged as one of the most important sources transforming cultural industries in other countries. In this sense, many scholars argue that cultural homogenization, which refers to standardized culture around American pattern, is a consequence of globalization".

However, not everywhere appears to be affected in the same way. [8] Chon explain that it is much easier to see cultural homogenization in terms of Hollywood film distribution in the UK and Canada than in certain other countries. They argue that, "On the other hand, it is possible to explore cultural resistance or hybridization to Hollywood films in other countries. In this sense, it can be suggested that although U.S. has dominated international film production and distribution and has led to the similarities of cultural patterns, the reception processes may be differentiated by cultural differences." This clearly complicates the concept of global culture and would appear to support Featherstone's (above) definition. Nevertheless, American media culture appears to have had considerable success in infiltrating, for example, the UK's market, and has at least influenced that of other countries.

"About two decades ago, when the world was engaged in the long tiresome debate on the new international information order (NIIO), the developing nations expressed their anxieties regarding the terrifying imbalances in the international flow of information and media products and as a consequence, the growing hegemonizing of their national media systems by the overpowering western culture monolith. They also articulated with much gusto their demand for decolonization of information and culture and protection of their national sovereignty against the western cultural onslaught. Now, twenty years hence, these issues stand erased from the world's memory and the national media the world over have finally bowed down to the dominance of the global culture without any visible concerted critique outside and within" [9].

But not every country appears to have bowed down so easily. An interesting case study is that of India. Bollywood films are not small-scale or minority-based, as opposed to many cinemas in other non-Western countries, and present a genuine challenge to Hollywood, at least in India. "Hollywood's failure to supersede Bollywood reveals that an existing Third World culture can be a crucial factor in halting Western cultural imperialism...It demonstrates, finally, that the use of culture as a global force, and as a hegemonic force, is not confined to the West alone" [10]. However, the true situation would appear to be more complicated than this. It has been argued that, although there has been a recent nostalgic surge for Bollywood films in India, there have also been an increasing

number of failures [9].

To Raj (above), the problem is due to the wider processes of globalization which have discouraged Bollywood from maintaining their 'roots', thereby becoming less creative: "The present-day Indian popular cinema (as elsewhere in the South) is a classical case where a national mass medium foregoes its indigenous roots and opts to get swept away by the dominance of a fanciful globalized culture." Therefore, he appears to suggest that Bollywood's struggles are due to their own acceptance of what is perceived to be global culture, rather than simply Hollywood's invasion of the market. As a result, it is clear that the views of people and companies as to globalization are influencing global culture, even if they may be misinterpreting the views of the nation by opting for what they consider more globalized cinema films. The digital age and modernization are seen to be reducing the viability of traditional films, which would appear to continue in the future with the introduction of new technologies and the dying out of the older, more traditional and less globalized sections of the population. The question, it would appear, is whether the youth still value their cultural heritage enough to preserve it, or will instead opt to become submerged into an increasingly global cinema culture.

Certainly, it appears that "American films are the only ones that reach every market in the world" [11]. According to The Economist, "Only in film does America really rule – and cultural protection is no answer", although it does admit that global companies must 'act local' if they are to succeed in many markets. But, at least in India, Bollywood appears to require no special protection in order to survive, and its regional television channels (see below) are thriving. Local cultures are, in some places, surviving and even growing with the introduction of what can be considered as more globalized, or Western, cultures.

[5] (above) considers how, in the 1980s, the American TV series Dallas was seen by many as symbolic for cultural imperialism. He points out that although it has an international audience of people from many different cultural backgrounds, it cannot be assumed that it will have an obvious ideological manipulative effect on the viewer. People who claim to be against capitalism have admitted to watching and enjoying the show. In fact, he suggests that, by watching the series, some people may actually become more strongly attached to what they see as their cultural values, as they may be repulsed by the culture presented in the episode. Similarly, it could be said that too much interference from Hollywood in India may help create resurgence in, for example, the cultural values of Bollywood films.

A benefit of the digital revolution is the proliferation of television channels that may now coexist. In India, this has led to the production of local television ventures which have capitalized on the distinct differences in the Indian languages from state to state. "The most famous example being Sun TV, started by a Tamil and based in Madras. It started off as a Tamil channel then expanded into Telugu into Kannada and into Malayalam, and is now proposing to expand further... it's a very, very complicated and vast field. And basically, pure English language programming has not been very successful, so everybody has had to change to deal with that" [12]. However, the mere survival and even local promotion of particular cultures does not mean that they are engaged in networks and flows. Although it is possible for a resident of the United Kingdom to, for example, view certain Indian programs in the comfort of their own home, it would be very difficult if not impossible to have the wide range available in India. Clearly some

flows exist, but a person in India is more likely to have access to a wider range of channels in English than a person in the UK would have access to Indian channels, and it could be argued (see below) that Indians would be more likely to want the English language challenge because of globalization.

Another area of increasing interest is news production due to its ability to inform audiences of certain selected information and promote particular views. Therefore, the changing ownership of national news broadcasts raises many issues. "The development of technology and news distribution infrastructures has enabled news access anywhere in the world. The constant inflows of information and the visibility of other cultures create a cultural and social reflexivity that makes each choice in the newsrooms a conscious cultural effort. Owing to the dynamic flows of media images, texts, sounds and graphics across countries, globalization entails both an increased awareness of other cultures, often in competition with one's local culture, and much more immediate experience of the world as a whole" [13].

Clausen argues, in her case study of Japan, that rather than global news distribution causing increasing homogenization, "global news is particular to each country". This is because "Every nation, like every individual, has contradictory desires. They want to learn from and imitate others, but at the same time they want to be different from others. Just as every individual wants to create and maintain his or her individuality, every nation wants to create and maintain its cultural identity...Therefore, although no nation would oppose inflows of foreign cultures and information per se, it would like to keep it under a certain level or under its control" [14].

From Clausen's article it is clear that, at least in Japan, news broadcasting has adopted some of what could be called 'global news' characteristics, such as global diffusion of information about events, but retains a distinctive Japanese imprint which distinguishes it from other news broadcasters in other countries. A pessimistic view would be that although international broadcasters such as CNN do alter their content and style to cater for each national audience, it could be argued that it is no different than McDonald's offering slightly different menus in each country. However, there may be more to it than this and it is certainly the case in Japan that although competition in news broadcasting has increased, broadcasters using the Japanese language, for example, appear to be as popular now as they have ever been. This, at least, would appear to restrict the notion of a global news culture embracing everyone, but that is not to say that the homogenizing tendencies of transnational corporations should be ignored.

Another area of interest relates to the increasing globalization of the retail market. As domestic markets in Western countries have become saturated, large European and American retail firms are opening outlets in, especially, Asia and Eastern Europe [15]. This is increasing the globality of retail culture as companies are now investing more and more in so-called 'emerging' economies. Tesco, for example, has become the market leader in Thailand since it began operations there in 1997. [15] above explain how companies such as Tesco are opening up hypermarkets in Asia and turning the supply chain upside down.

Before the arrival of the transnational retail outlets, countries such as Bangkok did not have comparably large places to shop in, and the negotiating power of them means that local suppliers are forced to follow their rules with little say. Similar to in Western countries, companies like Carrefour are forcing many smaller companies out of

business through their bargaining power and cheaper prices due to their considerable economies of scale. Cultural habits are changing with respect to shopping and consumption patterns. In markets such as Thailand, these have been altered dramatically over the last few decades by the arrival of new retail formats, firstly in terms of department stores and fast-food restaurants, and more recently hypermarkets and convenience stores, with dire consequences for local markets and street stalls [16].

However, Dicken's studies relating to global production networks have provided us with some interesting insights. Rather than complete homogenization of retail culture, it would appear that there has been an element of merging of corporate cultures, but obviously the degree to which this occurs varies depending on the country and company concerned. For example, Tesco in Bangkok does not look the same as a Tesco in the UK. You would be unlikely to see a fish-tank containing live fish for consumption in the UK, but this would be perfectly normal in a Tesco in Bangkok. Many firms, therefore, acknowledge the importance of catering for local tastes, exemplified by their commitment to buying local produce where possible and economically viable. Other companies, however, including Ikea and Marks and Spencer, appear to be more reluctant to change their style in other countries. Overall, therefore, it would appear that, with regards to global retailing, Western retail culture is generally increasing its dominance across the world, particularly in Asia and Eastern Europe. Homogenization is the current pattern but, as has been shown, local tastes do matter at least in relation to some elements of retailing. There appears to be little evidence of retail cultural flows back to Western countries, with the notable but limited exception of the recent introduction of hypermarkets in, for example, the UK, exemplifying the case for homogenization.

Another symbol frequently associated with the homogenization of global culture is the spread of the American-style fast food industry, in particular, McDonald's (see, for example, [17]). It is interesting to note that seven of the world's ten busiest Mc Donald's restaurants are located in Hong Kong [18]. But does this mean that Western cuisine culture has successfully infiltrated the culture of Hong Kong? As Watson points out, the layout of a McDonald's in Hong Kong is no different than one in Boston although, as with Tesco in Bangkok, McDonald's to tend to alter the content of their menus slightly – though keeping the basic categories the same - to cater for local tastes. Nevertheless, there are no typical Chinese food products, such as rice dishes.

Watson (above) explores whether having McDonald's in Hong Kong really helps to create a homogenous global culture, and makes some curious observations. He explains that "The people of Hong Kong have embraced American-style fast foods, and by so doing they might appear to be in the vanguard of a worldwide culinary revolution. But they have not been stripped of their cultural traditions, nor have they become "Americanized" in any but the most superficial of ways. Hong Kong in the late 1990s constitutes one of the world's most heterogeneous cultural environments... and the transnational is the local" (1997). A supporter of this view would be [19] who argued that key forces in cultural change be used by communities to adapt and innovate within an increasingly global society, encouraging cultural hybridity. However, many places in the world could be argued as culturally heterogeneous in that the transnational is their local, but arguably this has happened – after all, Hong Kong, or anywhere else for that matter, has never always been transnational – through processes of globalization and this is creating a global culture in the form of transnationalism as

opposed to local places with distinct identities.

The pressures of economic development and competing in a global economy have undoubtedly encouraged conforming to certain elements of global culture, and this can be clearly identified with regards the integration, sometimes forced, of indigenous cultures into 'modern' culture. An example of this is the displacement of West Malaysia's minority indigenous Orang Asli in the name of development, cultural and economic. The government of Malaysia uses propaganda to explain how moving people "who once lived only in the forest" [20] is in aid of their socio-economic development and, as a result, the indigenous communities should be grateful to 'Malays' for bringing them into 'civilization'. Consequently, local cultures are being forcibly absorbed into an arguably overarching global culture.

On a more positive note, however, local cultures are using the increased global integration brought about by globalization to help to preserve their ways of life. Bunnell T [21] explains that transnational networks of indigenous peoples are growing and, through each of their experiences of cultural repression, they are sharing ideas and methods of resistance and fighting for their rights to place in the courts. Although this demonstrates an element of cultural hybridity, the overall picture seems to follow more closely the pattern of cultural imperialism and homogenization.

A list of indigenous people who have struggled to keep or have lost their identity through the loss of their land would not be short. It would include, for example, tribal communities in India who have been forced off their lands to make way for an eco-development project, and the Gana and Gwi people in Botswana who have seen their houses razed and families resettled by the government [21, 22]. The moving of indigenous people from their lands is significant, as "Small tribal cultures cannot be integrated without total loss of their identity. The benefits of civilization which well-wishers are anxious to bring them also spell their doom, for it means their enclosure within a system of values which is the very opposite of that which gives meaning to their way of life" [23].

According to Seabrook, global culture is now virtually omnipresent, and in some ways, he is right, but he is perhaps too critical of the inability of cultures to prevail against even forced assimilation. Despite all of the efforts of many countries, a significant amount of indigenous cultures has been able to either coexist with or isolate themselves from global society. Tourism, for example, has helped to preserve indigenous people of Matmata in Tunisia, as the government recognizes their value for this purpose. But it has also meant that they have become much wealthier and, as a result, it is not unusual to see a satellite attached to the walls or roof of a cave. Nevertheless, they are encouraged to maintain their traditional ways of living as, without them, the tourists would not keep coming.

But the damage that tourism has done to many local cultures cannot be ignored. "In Hawai'i, the destruction of our land and the prostitution of our culture is planned and executed by multi-national corporations, by huge landowners, and by collaborationist state and county governments. The ideological gloss that claims tourism to be our economic savior and the "natural" result of Hawaiian culture is manufactured by ad agencies, tour companies, and the state of Hawai'i which allocates some $60 million dollars a year to the tourism advertising budget" [24]. Trask argues that Hawaii has been colonized and its culture abused in many ways through the medium of the tourist industry through, for example,

the view that "Our 'aina, or lands, are not any longer the source of food and shelter, but the source of money. Land is now called "real estate," rather than Papahanaumoku, "she who gives birth to islands".

Native Hawaiians have to consider leaving their homeland due to economic necessity brought about by the wishes of a global society. However, Trask explains that there is increasing resistance to the production of more tourist facilities and suggests that the people of Hawaii may finally be moving towards de-colonization. This highlights the difficulty in producing a global culture because as culture becomes more globalized, resistance has a tendency to increase. Whether a culture can survive, however, depends on a number of factors such as whether its eradication is intended or not and the degree to which the people who belong to the culture feel the need, and have the necessary resources, to sustain it in the face of globalization.

Another element of a global culture could be the spread of the English language. With the US being the biggest driver of economic globalization, and English therefore being the preferred language of business in many international transactions, countries wanting to prosper cannot underestimate the importance of English. It is believed that about a quarter of the world's languages are under threat, and there are now hundreds of languages with fewer than 50 speakers each [25]. "As cultural diversity decreased, the number (of languages) dropped. Linguists project that most endangered languages, especially those no longer spoken by children, will be extinct by the year 2100. If they are right, thousands of languages are doomed" [26].Although there are more people who speak Mandarin Chinese than English as a first language, English is much more widespread throughout the world due to Britain's colonial legacy and, more recently, the rise of the USA.

But that is not to say that the spread of English alone is causing the disappearance of many languages as that has happened throughout history for a variety of reasons. English is not as widely spoken in terms of its trans territorial and transcultural corporate identity as Latin and Arabic once was [27]. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the spread of English as an international '2nd' or 'business' language is making it increasingly difficult for languages with fewer speakers to exist. The increasing mobility and transnationalism of people, accompanied with the economic and opportunistic benefits of speaking and writing in English is undoubtedly altering local cultures to some degree.

The English language is even seeping into other languages, particularly in relation to new words associated with science and technology. For example, the word for computer in Indonesia is computer. Therefore, with the growth and invention of new technologies, languages are becoming increasingly, though slowly, similar to English. Interestingly, however, there is an element of interchange: "...when I was young in Australia there was an expression head sherang which actually probably came via the P and O boats, referring to the person in charge of the Goanese waiters, sailors and deckhands, and it's actually an Indian word, again from Hindustani, and yet it was being used in ordinary Australian speech and I suppose people wouldn't have had a clue where it came from" [28]. This is an example of networks of culture but, although exceptions like this exist, it is clear that the English language is infiltrating more and more cultures, and globalization is encouraging people to adopt it as their own for their economic and wider social wellbeing.

Finally, I think it is worthwhile to consider the events of September 11th, 2001, in the USA. Islamic fundamentalism has developed and established itself as an opposition to what it could be argued to view as a global Western culture being forced on all people around the world. Although it is true that, for example, "Iran is subject to multiple cultural flows" [29], it is the Western flows that are often considered to be hostile and even imperialist in nature. While the name of the footballer David Beckham may be familiar to many young people in Iran, the opposition to many elements of a Western or global culture are evident in its reluctance to fully immerse itself in 'global society'.

"Some, for economic and strategic reasons, would like Iran to accommodate with the West, even with the United States. Others, loth to stain the revolution's purity, are prepared to accept Iran's isolation, protecting the country from the "westoxification" that has, in their view, corrupted too many Muslim countries." [30] And, in the view of The Economist, the "others" are currently winning: "In the short run, Iran is getting grimmer. One day the ruling ayatollahs will lose their deadening grip on power. But not soon". However, international pressure and domestic reformers may eventually result in even Iran dropping its distinct cultural stance in favor of 'modernization' [31].

Given the limited number of examples shown above and the sheer complexity of culture, it is consequently difficult to conclude comprehensively as to whether a global culture means the emergence of one single culture embracing everyone on earth. However, what I think the above examples do show is that globalization is leading to the dominance of particular cultures, especially those associated with the United States and 'the West'. Although there is a degree of differentiation between elements contained in a global culture from country to country, there does appear to be an overarching hybrid of culture – emanating from the West – which is stifling more vulnerable cultures across the world. As a result, I believe that the idea of two-way cultural flows is often more fanciful than it is realistic. The very nature of culture means that there could never realistically be one completely uniform culture embracing everyone, but from the examples I have discussed above I would argue that a global culture, while stimulating interest in certain cultures, is leading to a reduction in the number of cultures being practiced, and certainly supports and encourages the adoption of Western cultural values.

Nevertheless, all in all, the situation is far from clear-cut in the present – partly because we, the people who are trying to analyze it, are part of the equation - and so it is necessary to look into possible futures and discover what is being imagined by some of the greatest visionaries of our present time. This, I would argue, will help us to explain what is happening in the present by showing what people are visualizing to be the future.

Part 2. The Nation-State – The Present

In the following I have explored a variety of issues relating to the ways in which globalization is considered to be affecting the importance and roles of the nation-state. Economic globalization in the form of, for example, trade liberalization and privatization present nation states with new challenges, such as the provision of welfare benefits, in an increasingly globalized world. Regional integration and the development of the Internet and communications technologies appear to be eroding boundaries, reducing the regulatory powers of states, and promoting a global culture which may limit the ability of nation-states to produce national culture. It has even been suggested

that 'global cities' may be more important than nations in guiding the world economy [32]. On the other hand, the recent exercise of military power by, in particular, the USA and Great Britain in Iraq illustrates that nation-states maintain fairly exclusive privileges over certain issues, and the moves towards devolution of central state government to local authorities in some countries displays an altered role of the nation state. The increasing importance of spatialities such as the local, regional and the global are bringing into question the prior dominance of the national.

Initially, it is necessary to consider what globalization refers to in the context of nation states. There is an abundance of definitions and descriptions as to the meaning of globalization, but a useful general example would be that it encompasses a set of processes which relate to the "widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual" [33]. This interconnectedness has encouraged multi-layered global governance and has, therefore, forced states to reconsider their role. More specifically, globalization has opened up borders, led to internal interference (in some cases) from other states, encouraged co-operation between states, and has resulted in "the growth of new centers of public authority above and below the state (which have) eroded the primacy of the state" [34].

Over time, through the processes of globalization which arguably began with the colonization of many regions of the world by imperial powers like Britain and France, the world has changed from a collection of numerous, small and autonomous states (e.g. the Italian city-states) to a world containing big and powerful sovereign countries. For an overview of the introduction and rise of modern nation-states, see [33]. Now, economic integration appears to be influencing the roles of nation states within their borders. For example, the liberalization of financial markets and the push towards a free market economy can leave an individual state vulnerable when another state that it trades with suffers an economic decline, and adds strain to existing welfare systems.

Nevertheless, there are certainly winners and losers. "It is perhaps useful to distinguish the 'state' as specific national entities, from the 'State' as a generic form of governance...While smaller or less influential states might have experienced a decline in power, particularly when under very open economic regimes or the disciplinary surveillance of multilateral organizations such as the IMF, other states (such as the USA) experience no diminution, and perhaps even an enhancement, of geopolitical and geoeconomic power" [35].

According to 36. Lechner [36], there is a widespread view on political globalization. This view is held by [37], who argues that, "...the older patterns of nation-to-nation linkage have begun to lose their dominance." He believes that the process of decline for nation-states is not irreversible but, as history has shown us, only extreme things like a war or a severe natural disaster are likely to do this. Ohmae believes that, "...in today's borderless economy, with its rapid cross-border (flows), there is really only one strategic degree of freedom that central governments have...and that is to cede meaningful operational autonomy to the wealth-generating region states...to catalyze the efforts of those region states to seek out global solutions, and to harness their distinctive ability to put global logic first and to function as ports of entry to the global economy."

But are we really living in a global borderless economy? Clearly,

Ohmae is of the opinion that states can do little in a global economy and that we should – in fact, have - moved away from state power and instead towards regional power. He presents many examples of what he calls 'region states', such as the increased trade between Hong Kong and Shenzhen which he argues is "the driving force in the lives of the people in Shenzhen".

[38] expands on [37] and clearly believes that global markets are decreasing the power and authority of states. She argues that, "The Asian governments will be under increasing pressure from Washington to adopt more liberal non-discriminatory policies on trade and investment". This, she believes, will result in decreasing unity and the authority of the government following contests among vested interests in both the private and public sectors. Technological change and the rapid escalation of capital costs will, according to Strange, result in states competing against each other to bring transnational corporations to their country. States need these corporations because of their huge resources and to ensure that they are competitive in a global economy. In the European Union, it is not uncommon for member states to compete against each other, offering various incentives to transnational corporations in order to convince them to locate in their country.

Transnational corporations are often tempted to locate in the developing world, where labor costs are lower and unions are weak. [39] points out that, because companies can move to wherever costs are the lowest, this results in governments having to do all they can to bring transnationals to them. This means that the transnationals are the dominant negotiating power, not the individual states. According to Rodrik, "...international economic integration is taking place against the background of receding governments and diminished social obligations".

An effect of political globalization could clearly be to reduce, for example, social insurance and the bargaining power of labor, and this appears to be happening in a number of countries across the world. By allowing free trade and capital flows we are enabling developing countries to be undercut by cheap imports from other, usually richer, countries. This is likely to result in job losses and poverty to producers in the affected country, while the state appears to be forced to accept this as a consequence of political globalization.

Alternatively, [40] appears to say that states have considerable ability to control economic integration: "I argue that the relationship between the political power of the left and economic policies that reduce market-generated inequalities has not been weakened by globalization; indeed, it has been strengthened in important respects". According to Garrett, states can act to reduce the negative impact of a free market by ensuring there is a strong social support system. This, along with cooperation between employers and labor organizations to ensure a fair state support system, would result in a more balanced economy and a capable nation state.

In the UK, regional economic integration is taking place, in particular, through our membership of the European Union. It is believed that some things are made better through closer integration, particularly with regards free trade, among nearby countries at a similar stage of development. Globalization can be seen in that the majority of the members of the EU have abolished their currencies and replaced them with the EURO, which increases economic integration but, as a consequence, reduces the power of the nation-state in its economic management. Although the EU was initially created to help prevent further wars following World War II, it has

increasingly been more important in negotiating trade agreements and eliminating trade barriers within the Union.

The recent developments regarding a constitution of Europe suggests that Europe has, in fact, became the new nation state of Europe. Ever since the authoritative UK case, R v Secretary of State for Transport, ex parte Factortame Ltd (1990) 2 AC 85, the British government has accepted that Community Law is superior to domestic law. This is an example of the diminishing regulatory significance of individual nation states in Europe, but the states do, of course, retain important powers of governance, such as in the field of defense – although one of the aims of the constitution is to create a common defense policy. However, as time goes by, it is becoming clear that more and more powers are being surrendered to the EU and, according to, Jasper W [41] supporters of the European Union, "...have lied to conceal their true goal of a socialist regional superstate." Whether this is true is a matter of conjecture and certainly most members refute this statement, including British European Commissioner, Chris Patten.

The reality is that there are major disagreements within the European Union as to integration and enlargement. France, for example, may well be interested in creating a political union in Europe which would effectively remove all important national powers from individual states, whereas Britain would instead prefer enlargement of the EU to create a bigger regional market as opposed to deeper internal integration [30]. The unofficial policy of Britain, therefore, would seemingly be less detrimental to the traditional role of the nation-state, although the effects of creating more networks of global trade cannot be ignored and are discussed below.

Nevertheless, it is equally true that new nations are being formed despite the pressures of global markets. [42] points out that, "Czechoslovakia peacefully divided into the Czech and Slovak republics, and Scotland has its first parliament in almost three hundred years." According to Lind, "Globalization is reshaping nations – but it is not replacing nations. A Norwegian may order a product from Thailand over the Internet but he is still a Norwegian; it is the Norwegian government, not the Thai government that provides for his health care and his state pension out of taxes levied on his fellow Norwegians." This may be true at the moment, but there can be no doubt that globalization has the potential to reduce or even replace the roles of nations. For example, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that at some point in the future Norway could belong to the European Union and that the EU may be the regulatory body that provides health care to countries within the Union.

However, nation states are also being challenged from below. Devolution and the development of local economies are gaining in popularity in some areas of the world. For example, there was the introduction of the first Scottish Parliament since 1707 when the Scotland Act 1998 was passed in the United Kingdom, devolving some legislative powers. Therefore, power is becoming less centralized in some nation states, with growing recognition of local differences and the benefits of allowing particular areas the direct ability to control certain aspects of their society. However, many important powers, such as those relating to external affairs, are often excluded. This leaves the nation state in a position to take back the powers it vests in another authority as, for example, the UK did in relation to Northern Ireland.

Although the signs are not always encouraging for localized

economies – the people living in the north-east of England recently voted against the introduction of an elected regional assembly – there does appear to be increasing support for local economies when more considerable powers are devolved. The Green Party in the UK is a strong supporter of economic localization. They argue that "economic localization provides a political and economic framework for people, local government and businesses to rediversify their own economies...enabling poorer countries to protect their infant industries and food production systems from ruthless and often devastating competition from cheap imports, thus allowing them to develop diverse and resilient local economies that respond to local needs" [43]. In an increasingly globalized world in which an event in one part of the world can have a knock-on effect somewhere else, people are realizing the need to have more control over their lives, and this can be done through economic localization.

The increase in flows of information, capital, and cultural communication around the world – especially among those countries considerably emerged in the global economy – associated with globalization and assisted by technology such as the Internet have led, according to Castells M [44], to "the rise of the network society". He discusses the increasing regionalization of international trade through the construction of trading blocs including the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement. However, he points out that "the intensity of intra-regional trade is in fact lower in Western Europe than in America or Asia, undermining the importance of institutionalization in reinforcing intra-regional trade". Similarly, Held, D. [33] argue "the evidence suggests that trade regionalization is complementary, and has grown alongside, interregional trade".

Castells M [44] even claims that the states within the European Union "have formed, together, a new form of state, the network state, one of whose key features is the sharing of a unified economy, not just a trading bloc". This clearly reduces of the role of the traditional nation states of Europe, although Castells does not believe they will disappear completely. But the situation is not the same in all 'trading blocs': members of, for example, the Asian Pacific Economic Council are not as unified, with China and India adopting different policies and pursuing different connections. However, he believes that once countries become a part of the global economy, and therefore part of the 'network of flows', it is almost impossible to depart from the system as they will simply be excluded from the loop which provides, for example, labor and technology. They will, in effect, be left behind. This seriously reduces the ability of nation states to change their destiny.

Wolf M [45] Agrees that "free movement of goods and services makes regulating capital flows more difficult", but he maintains that it is "not impossible; foreign direct investment can flow across national barriers to trade in goods without knocking them down". Nevertheless, globalization is clearly making it much more difficult for states to regulate their national economies in the face of liberalization and global networks.

Although it is often argued that the European Union is leading to the suppression of its member states, not everyone shares that view. Argues "The evolution of the European Community since 1945 has been an integral part of the reassertion of the nation-state as an organizational concept. The argument goes, however, beyond this, because the historical evidence points to the further conclusion that without the process of integration the west European nation-state might well not have retained the allegiance and support of its

citizens in the way that it has...After 1945 the European nation-state rescued itself from collapse, created a new political consensus as the basis of its legitimacy, and through changes in its response to its citizens which meant a sweeping extension of its functions and ambitions reasserted itself as the fundamental unit of political organization...To supersede the nation-state would be to destroy the Community". However, while it is likely to be true that the EU helped to reassert the nation state in the past, it is clear that the current thinking relating to the role of the Community and the processes of globalization have surely altered this position.

Although global markets may well diminish the importance of nation states at this time, not all cultures and national identities are likely to be lost, although a number of indigenous cultures are undoubtedly under threat [21]. It is true that the American culture, in particular, is becoming increasingly dominant in modern society across the world, but it is also creating a backlash against it which could result in the resurgence of cultures under threat. For example, when the German Foreign Minister Joshka Fischer suggested that the EU should become a single federation, Portuguese minister, Francisco Seixas da Costa complained that, "The Germans are trying to make Europe look like its own country. Europe needs to be made according to the will of citizens." Also, although the United States of America has one national government, its federal nature has ensured that each state retains some powers and, with it, their individual cultures and differences. Nevertheless, the spread of a 'global culture' is often associated with the Americanization of the world.

Another area of interest relates to the regulatory role of the nation-state and the emerging global electronic economy. As Doyle C [46] explain:

"...if nation states continue to operate with the instruments applied in the context of national borders, national jurisdictions and unilateral action on laws and taxes, many of the nation state's instruments will become obsolete and unable to fulfil their intended purpose. Alternatively, if nation states are to move forward in the electronic economy, then the challenge is to determine how they can take that which is enduring and valuable from its legacy, and combine this with the necessary modernization in order to make it relevant to its citizens and wealth generators in the next century. The second assertion is that nation states, both individually and collectively, need to regulate and shape the future of the electronic economy if it is to develop to its potential".

Therefore, it is necessary for states to work together to produce regional and global agreements in order to be successful in regulating the electronic economy. Nation states will still occupy, according to Doyle, the central role in the technological revolution, but their roles will be transformed to one of greater cooperation through "multilateral and integrated approaches to trade, taxation, intellectual property, citizens' rights, privacy, terrorism, policing and the prosecution of crime".

Is there a relationship between opening up a state's markets and its ability to raise money through taxes? According to it would appear not – or at least not in the way that you might think. It states that Dani Rodrik once wrote "Globalization has made it exceedingly difficult for government to provide social insurance... At present, international economic integration is taking place against the background of receding governments and diminished social obligations. The welfare state has been under attack for two decades." However, the findings of The Economist reveal that

Sweden and Denmark, who they claim are two of the most open economies in the world, have far higher tax ratios as a percentage of GDP than the USA. And, instead of decreasing, general government receipts have, in the main, increased from 1990-2000 in the G7 countries. This would appear to go against the view of [47] who asserted that states are "becoming too small to handle really big problems and too large to deal effectively with small ones" [48].

Statistics such as these certainly suggest that the liberalization of economies, at least in the 'north', is not having a detrimental effect on the ability of states to raise revenue. However, it is worth remembering who The Economist is primarily aimed at, i.e. businessmen and other believers in the neo-liberal ideology: "Thus, as much as one can see The Economist's message on globalization as ideological drivel advancing the interests of elites, it resonates for readers – not by tricking them into seeing globalization through a distorted lens, nor just by giving them a way to intellectually justify their deeds – but by repeatedly invoking this hope and promise of realizing Utopian ideals through the globalization process" (Starr). Understanding the possible motives behind the writing of an article is, of course, vital in assessing its value. Not surprisingly, therefore, the view of The Economist, at least in this area, is consistent with an article in the Financial Times: "no evidence supports the conclusion that states can no longer raise taxes. On the contrary in 1999, EU governments spent or redistributed an average of 47 percent of their GDPs" [45].

But will this trend continue? Although, "when the Internet is used to buy tangible goods, governments can impose taxes...it is also sometimes difficult to locate an Internet server. If one cannot do so, how are taxes to be levied and tax treaties applied" [45]. This may appear to be relatively insignificant now, but the Internet is growing in importance and transactions are increasing every year, and the lack of any international regulatory Internet body is developing uncertainty and making it incredibly difficult for national governments to manage. According to Hood C [49] the ability of states to maintain or increase their ability to tax in 'the information age' is dependent on whether:

"(1) domestic political conditions...produce a tax culture or coalition that sustains it... (2) economic and technological development must produce suitable tax handles – forms of production, distribution, or employment that can be readily identified, valued, and controlled through intermediary organizations that can be economically overseen by state bureaucracy and thus enable taxes to be collected at relatively low cost (and) (3) an international regime that is benign for that type of state".

Therefore, Hood bases his interpretation of the ability of states to tax in the present and future on whether they can ensure that "the pillars on which the twentieth-century tax state was built" (see above) are not eroded. In particular, he sees a threat as to the state's power to shape taxation rather than the size of it. This may lead to taxes that are "easy to levy" as opposed to ones that are redistributive, leading to further inequality.

Although globalization has increased the mobility of money and many people in the 'north', "Labor, in any case, remains far less mobile than capital–rooted by ties of family, culture and language. In recent years, therefore, many governments have reduced their rates of company taxation (as well as granting special concessions for new investment), and have shifted the burden on to people instead. Taxes on wages and salaries have risen (chart 2). This has

more than made up for the fall in revenues due to lower company taxes" [50]. Therefore, governments have remained able to raise at least as much tax despite the pressures of global markets by simply passing the burden to citizens.

What cannot be denied, however, is that the growth of global markets has been linked to increases in unemployment and inequality in many countries. "Since the 1980s the demand for less-skilled and less-educated workers has fallen in all OECD countries. In Europe this has resulted in increased, long-term unemployment while in the U.S. it has shown up in a decline in average real wages at the bottom of the scale and a huge rise in earnings inequality" [48]. In the words of, for example, Jean Chretien, Canada's Prime Minister, "international finance knows no borders...we cannot stop globalization, we need to adjust to it..." His view is not isolated amongst world leaders and clearly suggests that the ability of nation states to control their economic policy is limited to say the least. However, it is not unusual for politicians to blame globalization when there are problems with the economy, and also to use it to push forward their own objectives. Clearly, nations are actors in the processes of globalization and therefore must influence its course.

The processes of globalization, such as the development of the Internet and vastly increased trade and integration, are least associated with much of the continent of Africa. This is surprising when you consider the amount of people and states that exist in the region. But they are not immune to the effects of globalization and certainly, for a variety of reasons, many nation states have had and are having a troubled time. [51] believe that, among other things, "an accelerating process of globalization, has called into question some of the basic premises of the contemporary nation-state project and it is perhaps in Africa, more than in other parts of the world, that the crisis of the nation-state project has been most obvious and overwhelming".

More specifically, "occurring side by side with the shift to neo-liberal ideas in economic policy making, was the acceleration of the process of economic globalization which had enormous implications for the management of national economic polices all over the world...As a direct result of the deregulation of financial markets the volume of financial capital outside the control of national and international monetary authorities increased to such a level that even the governments of the leading Western countries gradually started to lose sovereign control over their own national economic policies, while individual economic actors speculating in stock exchanges and currency markets became important forces driving the global economy". Many African nations in the '80s and '90s assumed huge debts and were then subjected to structural adjustment policies provided by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Much criticism has been made of such policies (see, for example, [52], which tend to increase inequality and, ultimately, leave countries with a bigger debt than they had in the first place.

The result of the neo-liberal agenda being pushed on to Africa was "the deepening social crisis...which led to social unrest...deepening social fragmentation and inequality which, in turn, frustrated the realization of the economic objectives of the programme". Ethnic tensions within states were multiplied and civil wars are not uncommon. Although in Europe, "Perhaps the most noticeable effect of war...was to cause the state to increase its ability to collect significantly more revenue with greater efficiency and less public resistance" [53], this has not been reflected in Africa for a variety of reasons relating to the efficiency and ability of the state to collect

taxes. This limits the ability of many nation states in Africa to raise taxes in order to build basic infrastructures that are necessary if they are to compete in a global market. The processes of globalization, such as the development of the Internet and vastly increased trade and integration, are least associated with much of the continent of Africa.

A strong supporter of the nation state is Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary. However, he is aware of the problems facing nation states in a global economy. He explains that, "...the speed and ubiquity of modern communications...challenge the authority, or even the relevance, of nation states." (2002) He believes that, "Globalization makes well-organized States if anything more necessary, not less. But even the best-organized States are not finding globalization easy to manage." He realizes that global markets are eroding the ability of nation states to deal with, in particular, economic security.

States in the developing world are now finding themselves unable to govern effectively, with illegal groups and businesses running rampant across the economy. But, "Even the strongest States look weak, to many of their citizens, because they seem unable to respond to the challenges of unemployment, deteriorating services, rising crime levels, and intrusive social change." However, Annan argues that a strong nation state is one that is a liberal democracy and not overly controlling, such as what existed in the Soviet Union. He believes that States should work together with, for example, the private sector to reach their objectives. Still, perhaps Annan does not realize the full extent of the power of transnational corporations, and that nation states, especially developing countries, are sometimes simply unable to fend for themselves. Instead, they feel obliged to push relentlessly forward in the pursuit of economic growth, without realizing the negative effects, such as those mentioned by Rodrik, of following such a strategy.

As a final point, it is worth considering whether globalization will eventually lead to a form of global governance as opposed to regional, national or local levels of control. The increasing inter-connectedness of national economies inevitably requires an element of international law and common rules and to a degree this already exists. The idea of a world government has always had its supporters and opposition: "At last, the world was united under one government. Utopia had arrived, and its leaders were determined to crush anything that could upset the delicate balance. To maintain the status quo, the World Government imprisoned several thousand scientists and their families and prepared an isolated orbital station where they will live out their lives in exile". Although this is fiction, the reality is that one-day a world government with significant powers may exist. While it is true that certain issues, such as the protection of the environment, would be best suited to international agreements, in order to preserve and spread diversity of culture and beliefs it is necessary for nation states to, at the very least, maintain many of their powers and, ideally, hand more to local authorities.

In conclusion, I would argue that there can be no doubt that the growth and widespread acceptance and encouragement of global markets are diminishing the significance of nation states in its ability to, for example, reduce wage inequality. In other ways, however, globalization appears to be merely altering the role of states. They can be seen as participants in a global system, with the richer nations dominating. Surprising as it may seem, however, globalization does appear to be actually improving the ability of nation states to deliver some of their aims. For example, "International agreements on criminal investigation and deportation, mutual defense, customs

and taxation harmonization, and statistical co-operation all mean that individual states can conduct their functions more, not less effectively both at home and abroad" [35]. It is evident that Europe appears to be heading towards the American federal system through closer integration, but there are still many fundamental differences of opinion among many Member States, and a superstate is more likely to be considered as a long-term ideal – at most - than a current proposal.

More worryingly, perhaps, is the effect that global markets are having on nation states in developing countries. The wealth and perceived importance of attracting transnational corporations to such states appears to be undermining governments and encouraging corruption and rebellion. More appropriate strategies need to be implemented by organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in order to ensure that developing countries have a strong government, which is capable of surviving in global markets without being abused by transnationals and unfair trade agreements. This is likely to require a global rethink on the effects of global markets and a greater and more sympathetic understanding. Ultimately, increased inequality and poverty will surely lead to greater disruptions to international trade and security in the future, which will hopefully reinforce the ability of stable nation states to change the direction of globalization to one in which equality and equity are the aims and intentions.

Part 3. Science fiction in Academia

Science fiction has long been used to further our understanding of a wide range of issues and concepts. In this section I will provide a few examples of when and how this has been done successfully. There is, for example, a journal titled 'Science Fiction Studies', and this will be used along with other articles to illustrate the varied uses of science fiction in academia.

Initially, it is useful to provide a definition of science fiction, and a good example of this is provided by a very famous and influential science fiction author:

"Modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us, the possible consequences, and the possible solutions. That branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings." [54].

Although it is debatable that science fiction is the only form of literature that deals with these issues – for example, does not particular works related to globalization also attempt to deal with some of these issues? Also, what is to be considered 'modern'? Does this include, say, the works of H.G. Wells? Alternatively, a more detailed and neutral definition can be found in the Encyclopedia Britannica:

"A literary genre...dealing with scientific discovery or development that, whether set in the future, in the fictitious present, or in the putative past, is superior to or simply other than that known to exist. Thus, the word fiction in the term not only signifies, as in common usage, a work of the imagination but also applies directly to the word science. Depending on the author's purpose, the degree to which the scientific element is fictionalized may range from a careful and informed extrapolation from known facts and principles to the most farfetched and even flatly contradictory of speculations. What remains constant throughout the imaginative spectrum is the appearance of plausibility, stemming from at least surface allegiance to the attitudes, methods, and terminology of

science' [55].

A good example of a dissertation exploring science fiction is 'How Science Fiction Influences the Public's Understanding of Science and Technology' [56]. This report uses qualitative and quantitative data in order to discover how science fiction affects understanding of science and technology, and also how people perceive it to affect science and technology. Its conclusion that science fiction does in fact have an effect, but the public do not generally appear to realize this, displays the lack of attention and recognition given to the importance of science fiction in society.

There are also a number of interesting articles which debate whether science fiction is 'scientific'. [57] explores this issue and distinguishes between 'hard' science fiction (possible alternative futures through science, technology etc.) and 'soft' science fiction (social science fiction). In this conception, soft science fiction is viewed as novels that contain little scientific basis or writing. However, Wager provides a valuable insight by explaining that all science fiction contains a necessary 'background', and, more importantly, that all science fiction authors are world-builders. As a result, they are all involving themselves with, especially, political science which is particularly relevant in this context. I would argue that almost all science fiction novels can offer something of relevance to the future of globalization, culture and the nation state, but the most valuable resources are those that are highly imaginative and aimed to be thought-provoking and reasonably scientific.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It was necessary for me to review a substantial amount of literature relating to globalization and culture and globalization and the nation state in order to have an understanding of the present situation. There is a huge quantity of literature available on these topics, and so it was necessary to use only a sample. As a result, it is not comprehensive and may appear at times to be rather simplistic, but it provides a background to what will be discussed later.

I selected the works that I did on the basis of my prior familiarity with them or the author, recommendations from fellow students and academics, and by searching for books and journal articles which appeared to have something to contribute to issues relating to globalization, culture and the nation state. I then concentrated on books and articles that focused on particular aspects of the issues that I am interested in, and I attempted to include a wide range of viewpoints in order to fully address each issue. Certain books and articles I did not use because of their unoriginality or due to, for example, a focus on the past which, though relevant, is not necessary to examine in detail in this instance.

I also considered the way in which other academics have used science fiction novels to forward their arguments, and I have done this mainly using random sampling. I selected random articles from journals related to science fiction and examined the way in which they conducted their research. This helped me to generate ideas for the way in which I have used the texts referred to below. There are, of course, other ways of doing this and I have analyzed them below.

The science fiction novels that I have used have been selected by me for a variety of reasons. The first, admittedly, is because of my own considerable interest and enjoyment in reading and studying the books concerned. Since I have enjoyed reading science fiction books from an early age, I am in possession of a large number of books and I was able to recall and select novels that I believe

will contribute the most to this analysis. Due to the enormous quantity of science fiction novels in existence, and the limited time I had available to write this report, many useful contributions and trains of thought will not be included here. But, since this is only intended to be an introduction to the immense possibilities that exist through the examination of such books and articles, I view this as a limitation rather than a major flaw.

One problem with using a range of novels for analysis is that they are not written in a format that suits this purpose. They are generally written in a way that allows for a large number of people to find it enjoyable and reasonably easy to read, which necessarily simplifies the language used and the concepts contained to an extent. They are also usually much longer in length than, for example, academic journals, and this makes it more difficult to find relevant information written concisely. In order to make it easier for the reader of this report to understand each novel, I have written a little about the plot of every book so that a background of the context of the issues is expressed.

Brockway M [56] uses mainly qualitative data in his project related to science fiction and its influence on the public's understanding of science and technology, but he also uses some quantitative data in order to help balance the report and allow for triangulation. The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches are frequently discussed (see, for example, [58]. In this specific example, the research methods employed consisted of documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and public questionnaires.

As with all research, the methods chosen by a researcher are intended to be the most appropriate for explaining and answering the aims and objectives of the research. However, there are often potentially better methods that are not chosen due to practical or ethical reasons. In my case, it would serve little benefit to conduct interviews and collect questionnaires from the general public as it would not contribute a great deal to answering my aims and objectives. It may have been interesting and provided a few insights, but overall, it would have been unethical to do this when most results and observations would not need to be considered in detail.

On the other hand, if I were able to interview science-fiction authors and academics that I have discussed in this report, in particular relating to their views on globalization, culture and the nation state in the present and in the future, then it may have yielded very valuable information which could have been analyzed comprehensively. However, the practical difficulties associated with attempting to contact and arrange interviews with successful authors, especially, who may reside in various countries across the world, renders such an approach unrealistic.

Two research methods that I could have used had I done things differently are content analysis and grounded theory. Content analysis "involves the making of inferences about data (usually text) by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics (classes or categories) within them. Grounded theory has been defined as a theory that is: "discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. In reality, both approaches to the analysis of qualitative data are inevitably more complicated and have a variety of similarities and differences.

Content analysis is the more straightforward of the two approaches. It often involves directly analyzing data by, for example, taking word counts and noting how frequently a particular word or phrase

appears. This can then be used to estimate the importance of the word or an idea behind it. It does not require going out into the field to gather data, but it does mean that research questions must be developed in advance that are linked to previous research. It is generally objective and, as a consequence, strongly associated with modernism.

Grounded theory, however, is more complicated. In contrast with content analysis, grounded theory does not require that research questions and hypotheses are decided previously. Instead, they will allow themselves an element of creativity by not being trapped into previous specialized study. The researcher will work with his or her participants to create the data and analyze the meanings on a variety of levels. It is not intended to be conclusive, but it is instead a flowing process that ends when the researcher feels that they have retrieved and understand as much data as they realistically can. It involves steps known as coding, which "…is a process for both categorizing qualitative data and for describing the implications and details of these categories. Initially, one does open coding, considering the data in minute detail while developing some initial categories. Later, one moves to more selective coding where one systematically codes with respect to a core concept" [59].

An advantage of content analysis is that it is generally unobtrusive. Since it does not require going out into the field to collect data, it means that people are not disturbed. However, although this may be desirable in certain circumstances, this also limits the value of the analysis. The connection between a researcher and his or her participants can be very useful in obtaining extra information, particularly with regards to meanings and comments that would otherwise remain hidden from view. In this regard and in relation to possibly having to print many questionnaires etc., content analysis is usually much less expensive than grounded theory. Therefore, for many people it is often the most practical form of data analysis.

One issue between the two approaches relates to the theoretical base. Content analysis "is often devoid of theoretical base, or attempts too liberally to draw meaningful inferences about the relationships and impacts implied in a study" [60]. Grounded theory, on the other hand, starts with general questions which are intended to guide, but not control, the research. As a result, some links between data and theory are forged, but they are not held strong – to draw an abstract comparison, in Chemistry they would be more comparable to van der Waals bonds than hydrogen bonds.

A problem with using content analysis is that it often disregards the context that produced the text, as well as what may happen after the text has been produced. Therefore, it has a fixed outlook that is difficult to change. Grounded theory is an on-going and variable process that allows for changes as the work progresses. Obviously, however, it is not perfect as research must stop at some point to allow evaluation. In a sense, a disadvantage of grounded theory is the very fact that it is flowing, as it is difficult to know when the research has been completed or when to stop.

One clear difference between content analysis and grounded theory is that content analysis appears to be more objective. This can be positive in that many people could research the same topic and obtain very similar results, but it also limits perspectives and means that a number of issues may be overlooked. Grounded theory, as an interactive process, can help to delve deeper into issues, but as a consequence there is always the danger of researcher bias/influence and the possibility of affecting the group that is being studied by the presence of the researcher.

Grounded theory analysis will inevitably be slightly skewed due to a variety of possible influences that may affect both the researcher and the participants. While content analysis may appear to avoid this, it is also not without dispute. A researcher may still affect the analysis by choosing to include only certain words in the study to be counted – intentionally or unintentionally – and so it is not impossible for two researchers to arrive at different conclusions. However, there are more opportunities for influences to interfere with the study when using grounded theory.

For example, both approaches could be useful for research that relates to awareness and participation of people living in Liverpool regarding the European Capital of Culture 2008 project. The objectivity and standardization – though, not perfect – of content analysis will be useful in providing the backbone of the research. Questionnaires containing a number of open and closed questions could be distributed, and tally counts of particular words and phrases could be used to help to determine, for example, how many people are aware of particular events happening within the city. Grounded theory could be useful when engaging in in-depth interviews and when observing a variety of ethnic groups. It could, therefore, help to understand better not only the level of awareness and participation but also the reasons why they believe it to be the situation.

Neither method is perfect and, as explained above, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages relating to each method. They are similar in that they can both be used in qualitative analysis to understand more about an issue in question, but their usefulness depends on the nature of the issue and, especially regarding grounded theory, on the background of the individual researcher. There are a whole range of approaches to qualitative analysis, but the two mentioned here are generally regarded as being the most widely-used.

ANALYSIS: THE FUTURE?

This section examines a variety of science fiction books with either utopian or dystopian themes. Basically, a utopian society could be described as one based around notions of equality, social harmony, economic prosperity and political stability. Its meaning – 'no place' in Greek and 'good place' in Latin – highlights its position as a fictitious, ideal place that is explained in books. A utopian society is usually created according to the morals and ideology of the author and often describes a form of blueprint for how a society might be run. The word appears to have originated from the novel with the same name by Thomas More in 1551, in which he created a utopian society.

A simple way of describing dystopia would be say that it is the opposite of utopia (e.g. lacking a 'perfect' quality of life) but this would not be entirely correct. In fact, dystopian visions often contain many elements of utopian societies, such as intense social control, but here they are usually taken to the extreme. However, it is particularly useful in that it does not merely explain what is wrong with utopian societies, but it also presents an alternative social viewpoint. For example, Orwell's book, 1984, (see below) is concerned with problems of the political and cultural context of what produces it. They provide warnings as to what could happen if certain trends continue, and as such they are invaluable to our understanding of the future of globalization, culture and the nation state.

My primary author for an analysis of the future of culture is Iain M. Banks, a best-selling British author – of both fiction and science-

fiction - who was born in 1954 and is still alive at the time of writing. I have chosen his ideas because they are particularly detailed and discussed over a large number of books. I hope to start a process whereby we can use these and other prophetic visions of the future to further understand our present state and also possibilities of where we are heading. Is it not possible, for example, that the existence of a large number of different cultures can lead to instability and eventually endanger the survival of the human race? In that sense, cultural homogenization or even cultural hybridization could be seen as an ideology which has an aim for the overall good, despite the significant and potentially irreversible costs involved.

Iain M. Banks decision to call what could be considered the hegemony of the future, in many of his science-fiction novels (including, for example, Consider Phlebas; Look to Windward; Excession), 'the Culture', is not insignificant. He clearly understands the importance and ability of culture to spread. 'The Culture' is not violent, unless provoked, but nevertheless manages to assimilate other cultures into its own. In this way it could be argued that it is not dissimilar to aspects relating to the spread of American or Western culture into indigenous and other cultures present in various places across the world.

To begin with, I think it is necessary to provide a brief outline of the fundamental characteristics of 'the Culture':

"The Culture is a group-civilization formed from seven or eight humanoid species, space-living elements of which established a loose federation approximately nine thousand years ago. The ships and habitats which formed the original alliance required each other's support to pursue and maintain their independence from the political power structures - principally those of mature nation-states and autonomous commercial concerns - they had evolved from.

The galaxy (our galaxy) in the Culture stories is a place long lived-in, and scattered with a variety of life-forms. In its vast and complicated history, it has seen waves of empires, federations, colonization's, die-backs, wars, species-specific dark ages, renaissances, periods of mega-structure building and destruction, and whole ages of benign indifference and malign neglect. At the time of the Culture stories, there are perhaps a few dozen major space-faring civilizations, hundreds of minor ones, tens of thousands of species who might develop space-travel, and an uncountable number who have been there, done that, and have either gone into locatable but insular retreats to contemplate who-knows-what, or disappeared from the normal universe altogether to cultivate lives even less comprehensible.

In this era, the Culture is one of the more energetic civilizations, and initially - after its formation, which was not without vicissitudes - by a chance of timing found a relatively quiet galaxy around it, in which there were various other fairly mature civilizations going about their business, traces and relics of the elder cultures scattered about the place, and - due to the fact nobody else had bothered to go wandering on a grand scale for a comparatively long time - lots of interesting 'undiscovered' star systems to explore... The Culture, in its history and its on-going form, is an expression of the idea that the nature of space itself determines the type of civilizations which will thrive there" [61].

In this futuristic society there is no scarcity of resources, no legal framework and yet hardly any crime. 'The Culture' is a very liberal society – drugs, for example, are not merely widely available but are actually contained within the glands of citizens and consequently

may be taken at any time, albeit without the danger of addiction or physical or mental harm. This concept is similar to the idea promoted by [62] in his science-fiction novel, Brave New World, in which he suggested that happiness is maintained chemically (mainly through a drug called soma), and this allowed the people to lead largely responsibility free lives devoted to pleasure, principally sex. The liberal approach to life here in 'the Culture' appears to have been helped by improvements in technology, but it also suggests that the descendants of 'the Culture' may have come from a particularly liberal and non-religious background. Its views and its democratic society suggest a much closer correlation with, for example, the Western society of the present than the government of the former Soviet Union:

"Politics in the Culture consists of referenda on issues whenever they are raised; generally, anyone may propose a ballot on any issue at any time; all citizens have one vote. Where issues concern some sub-division or part of a total habitat, all those - human and machine - who may reasonably claim to be affected by the outcome of a poll may cast a vote. Opinions are expressed and positions on issues outlined mostly via the information network (freely available, naturally), and it is here that an individual may exercise the most personal influence, given that the decisions reached as a result of those votes are usually implemented and monitored through a Hub or other supervisory machine, with humans acting (usually on a rota basis) more as liaison officers than in any sort of decision-making executive capacity; one of the few rules the Culture adheres to with any exactitude at all is that a person's access to power should be in inverse proportion to their desire for it. The sad fact for the aspiring politico in the Culture is that the levers of power are extremely widely distributed, and very short (see entry on megalomaniacs, above). The intellectual-structural cohesion of a starship of course limits the sort of viable votes possible on such vessels, though as a rule even the most arrogant craft at least pretend to listen when their guests suggest - say - making a detour to watch a supernova, or increasing the area of parkland on-board" [61].

Certainly, as time has progressed down the ages, there does appear to have been a general trend towards liberalization across many countries around the world, but this society will also have been influenced by the positionality of its male, white and Western author. The lack of successful authors of different backgrounds in science-fiction is a particular cause for concern.

Overall, the importance of positionality and its effect on research cannot be underestimated. It can affect research in a multitude of ways at every stage, from initial formulation to writing-up. In my case, I am comfortable that my positionality will not limit my research project to such an extent that it will become unworkable or significantly biased, but I am aware of the limitations that my positionality endows upon me. The challenge is not merely to try to prevent a particular positionality from showing through - as this is often unavoidable – but to realize, accept and explore them further in order to understand yourself better and to put your research and its findings into context. Inevitably, all research is done according to particular positionalities.

Of special interest – and what encompasses most of the novels about 'the Culture' – is its relationship with other cultures. As a rule, it 'tries' not to interfere with them, and does not encourage immigration as it fears that it would appear as a disguised form of colonialism. However, inevitably contact is made, intended or otherwise, and this can lead to positive or negative consequences. Some civilizations see the advantages of affiliation with 'the

Culture', but a lot depends on their current state of technological progress. More mature creatures tend to ignore 'the Culture' and other less-developed civilizations, unless of course they become a threat. Less developed civilizations sometimes join with 'the Culture' to become a part of the advanced technology and accompanied stability – if 'the Culture' grants them citizenship – or occasionally war breaks out because of, for example, 'Culture' spies or misunderstandings. Either way, not all cultures get along in the intergalactic cosmos, and cultural hybridization does appear to occur on the boundaries between cultures, but this is restricted as much as possible so as not to pass on potentially dangerous technologies to other cultures.

In the universe of 'the Culture', there are numerous of what could be called global and galactic cultures, but within, for example, 'the Culture', are of course many different communities with their own eccentricities and styles which could be viewed as subcultures. The very liberal and free society means that individuals are able to preserve, protect and/or modify cultures as they see fit, as long as they are not harming or interfering with others. The lack of scarcity for resources, and the availability of knowledge means that land and people need not be attacked, allowing cultures to grow without fear. However, the overarching culture of 'the Culture' clearly homogenizes to some degree, but this is necessary in order to create a reasonably stable society in which interaction can occur between people who follow somewhat different beliefs and customs.

Another interesting point is how technology may one day remove many of the problems and prejudices related to gender and sexuality, and Grantham (below) has some interesting points to make:

"In the Culture, there is no institutional prejudice on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, class etc., and an individual expressing such prejudice would be seen as a primitive savage. I see no reason for Objectivists, Randians and libertarians (or indeed, anyone) not sharing this sentiment. Yet apparently many do, and seem to long for a return to the fifties, an alleged golden age with clear gender roles, and clear social roles in general, in an apparently simple and stable culture...Perhaps full sexual and biological autarchy (as in voluntary and reversible control over/change of one's sex organs) is required in order to achieve a society like the Culture, free of sex- and gender-based bigotry and prejudice. If so, it is worth noting that this idea, also known as automorphism, doesn't only exist in the imaginative minds of science fiction writers, but is actively pursued by scientists today, and may actually be realized within a decade or two".

At the very least, such a breakthrough would certainly have profound implications for feminist theory!

Not all science-fiction authors, however, see the future as one of liberation and freedom. [63], in his novel 1984, created a world in which a totalitarian government exists that creates a language that must always be used, as a way of control. Words such as 'Big Brother', famous now due to the reality TV show, were first used here. This book makes it clear that while technology can lead to freedom, it can also provide governments and people with the ability to control society to a greater extent, through direct or indirect mind control. Although it a possibility, and may happen in the shorter-term, I would argue that this is more likely to be an intermediate phase, and that in the longer-term future eventually stability and freedom would arise as it would be unnecessary, difficult and unproductive to maintain an oppressed society for an extended period of time.

Orson Scott Card (white, male, American), with his 'Ender series

of science-fiction novels (which won two of the biggest awards in science-fiction, the Hugo and Nebula awards) explores interactions between our own cultures and that of alien cultures. In the first book of the series, Ender's Game (1985), it is the very lack of a cultural understanding among the humans the aliens (known as the 'Buggers') which results in war. The inability – or at least the lack of effort – by both sides to learn more about each other results in the near destruction of an entire intelligent life form, which is not dissimilar to some situations, especially but not exclusively in the past, when two considerably different cultures among our own people occurs.

In the sequel, Speaker for the [64], the humans claim to have resented their seeming destruction of the 'Buggers', but their fears are aroused by the discovery of another, though much more primitive, alien race called the 'Piggies'. People are assigned to observe them but not teach them anything about human culture and technology. This is explained so as to avoid contaminating 'Piggie' culture, but the real reason is the fear of the 'Piggies' one day taking to the skies and becoming a rival and potentially dangerous race of its own. However, the 'Piggies' are able to see some of the technology of the humans since humans also live on the planet, and eventually some of the observers illegally help the 'Piggies' to, for example, grow more food when it is clear that they need to do so. Although the observers influence the culture of the 'Piggies', it is done with the best intentions, and this therefore introduces a moral dilemma. Should the observers stay true to their obligations towards their own race, or should they help the 'Piggies' in their hour of need despite the potential dangers of doing so? Questions like this can be applied to many areas of current cultural debate.

Card, through a human character, Ender, explains this in the following manner:

"You see, the piggies don't think of the fence (that separates piggies from humans) the way we do. We see it as a way of protecting their culture from human influence and corruption. They see it as a way of keeping them from learning all the wonderful secrets that we know. They imagine our ships going from star to star, colonizing them, filling them up. And five or ten thousand years from now, when they finally learn all that we refuse to teach them, they'll emerge into space to find all the worlds filled up. No place for them at all. They think of our fence as a form of species murder. We will keep them on Lusitania (the piggies' home planet) like animals in a zoo, while we go out and take all the rest of the universe" [64].

A good example of culture clash occurs when the 'piggies' and the humans decide to cohabit the planet peacefully and attempt to establish a treaty outlining their needs. This, of course, requires concessions from either side. In the case of the 'piggies', their tendency to attack other tribes of their own species, which is a deeply embedded feature of their culture, is frowned upon by the humans and the 'piggies' must promise not to attack a tribe unless they are attacked themselves. The humans, on the other hand, must allow the 'piggies' to ask them any questions and provide truthful answers. As can be seen, therefore, although cultures can in fact be saved by contact with other cultures, they are also frequently hybridized to a lesser or greater extent, depending on a variety of factors. However, the hope is that as societies progress then the ability and desirability of preserving other cultures as much as possible increases. Nevertheless, interference is usually unavoidable and, at times, even desirable to all depending on the intentions of the dominant culture.

These ideas extend to environmental concerns. Sharing a planet with different cultures means that you must avoid contaminating and, in some cases, share resources. Such concerns exist in what is often considered to be the greatest science-fiction novel of all time, [65] by Frank Herbert, who died in 1986. When powerful 'off-worlders' and their armies come to the unique planet, Arrakis, to mine a life-expanding drug known as the spice mélange, the native 'Fremen' are alarmed at this intrusion. The off-worlders have no interest in talking to what they see as simple and primitive people who live in the desert and as such do not even attempt to talk to them at first. But when one of the off-worlders joins the side of the Fremen, all is set to change. To the Fremen, the spice and the land are sacred and it is their mission to remove all off-worlders from the planet.

As a result, the off-worlder who joined the Fremen needed to become a part of their culture but, necessarily, the Fremen also changed somewhat in order to be able to fight off the intruders. Through this interchange between the combination of the Fremen way of life and the off-worlder's knowledge, they were eventually able to claim the planet for their own. But afterwards many Fremen longed for their traditional way of life to be returned, as the war and their eventual success had changed the planet in ways that they could not have anticipated. Their dream was to replace the desert with plants and water, but this meant the destruction of the spice mélange. Before long, war had broken out among the Fremen and the culture had split into a variety of sections. What is clear, therefore, is that any interaction with other cultures can have unforeseen consequences, good or bad regardless of the intention of either culture involved.

In K-Pax (1995), Gene Brewer, an American practicing psychiatrist and author – depending on your interpretation of the story – introduces a person from another world that appears in present day New York, appearing as a normal human being. However, he is soon arrested for merely being in the wrong place at the wrong time and, because he does not answer questions like an everyday New Yorker, is soon detained in a mental institution. His crime? He claims to be from another planet. He is here, apparently, because he enjoys traveling around the universe experiencing different cultures and societies, though there are many things about our quite primitive world that he finds unpleasant, such as violence and the consumption of meat by humans. Our future, he says, is uncertain but he is unwilling to directly influence our path to the stars or self-destruction. Once again, the notion of futuristic civilizations limitedly interacting with – some would say teasing – less technologically advanced societies but refusing to help them in any material way, appears.

But is it realistically possible that one day we will be the ancestors of a 'Culture'-like society? As Grantham explains, this is not as far-fetched as it may first appear:

"In the not too distant future, we can already see a glimmer of an abundant society. A few key technologies are necessary for establishing abundance. In particular: nanotechnology, biotechnology, genetic engineering, further advances in electronics and computer technology, and further expansion into space including the establishment of microgravity industrial production facilities. All these are well underway, and they could have advanced far enough to completely penetrate society within the next 50 years...If all or most of these things happen, human society would have become much like the Culture. And, if that happens, Objectivist social theory and practice would need to be updated" [66].

In the present, the situation is not dissimilar. We are faced with a growing dominant culture, the Western culture – too complicated to define yet often instantly recognizable – which is influencing other parts of the world in a variety of ways. Because we are not as technologically advanced as 'the Culture', however, we have far more problems. Our nation-states, and their accompanying culture or cultures, have an interest in preserving particular cultures and removing others. These interests change over time, but the fact that it occurs is indisputable. For some countries, this means displacing indigenous settlers to make way for industrial projects, for others it could be a simple dislike for a particular culture and people. But now, the link between the nation-state and culture becomes clear. With the nation-state system – and indeed every system until our cultures reach a certain unknowable stage - there will always be serious issues relating to culture that cannot always be adequately solved.

However, for some, the concept of the nation-state will not disappear in the future, although it will be subservient to higher powers. Card (above), appears to follow this belief:

"The power of Starways Congress has been sufficient to keep the peace, not only between worlds but between nations on each single world, and that peace has lasted for nearly two thousand years… What few people understand is the fragility of our power. It does not come from great armies or irresistible armadas. It comes from our control of the network of (satellites) that carry information instantly from world to world…No world dares offend us, because they would be cut off from all advances in science, technology, art, literature, learning, and entertainment except what their own world might produce" [64].

This is interesting both in the sense of nation-state, and of culture. Nation-states still exist, and wars are limited. But they are limited to an extent by the fear of losing their new intergalactic culture. Nations and worlds have become dependent on the inflows of technology and culture and are not willing to risk losing it. This may show a lack of independence, but it also shows how supportive people appear to be of being a part of and contributor to the overarching culture. In this case it also explains that nations and worlds are an active, not merely passive, part of the cultural interchange.

Ben Bova, a best-selling male white American science-fiction and fact author, who is also still alive, frequently writes about a near-future world government (see, for example, the books Colony; Millennium; The Exiles Trilogy; Moonbase…). This was made necessary as, in particular, global environmental problems, such as flooding due to global warming, reached catastrophic levels. As we have witnessed recently with the failure of Kyoto, a number of countries, especially the USA, will put their national concerns ahead of the overall need for international cooperation. Without a binding international agreement that forces countries to act in what is perceived as the overall good, everyone may eventually be worse off. That is one of the reasons why the proposal of a world government is put forward.

The problem, however, is that nation-states, and their citizens, are not often willing to give their powers away to other people. A good example of this is that although many countries in Europe belong to the European Union, in practice member states retain the majority of the most fundamental powers, such as whether to go to war. That is why it is often necessary for an international disaster, such as a sharp upturn in global warming, to create the steps that will result in, for example, a world government which works the other way around. That is, a world government which holds fundamental powers but delegates others to communities across the world, preferably on a local scale so as to allow individual cultures to thrive and economic localization to take hold.

This is not to argue that a world government is the answer to all of our problems. There will, of course, always be arguments and disputes relating to the distribution and delegation of powers. In the era of globalization, it is necessary to, simultaneously, protect local cultures and yet maintain stability by promoting a diverse and productive set of global cultures that, by their existence, actually help to preserve local cultures. But one question still remains: who would constitute a world government? Further to Card's (above) comments, he believes that computers will have a far greater role in providing the security and assurance that such an important position would require but in the near future that is not realistic.

The dangers here are immense. "What happens if a One World Government falls into the hands of another Hitler? The people of the world would be no more able to stop a new Hitler than the people of Germany were able to stop the first one. Imagine the world today if Hitler had won WW2. That is the world which MUST sooner or later come to exist, cannot help but come to exist, under a one world government. That danger alone, of the creation of a one world dictatorship waiting to be plucked as a prize by the most ruthless cutthroat the species can breed, is alone reason to abandon the suggestion of a one world government… Think of a multi-nationed world as a ship with multiple water tight compartments. No matter what happens to any one compartment, the ship as a whole sails onward. A one world government is a ship with only one compartment. If that compartment gets into trouble, the whole ship must sink. Even today, the absence of international barriers to trade means that economic folly by one government can have disastrous consequences for all others. Compartmentalization is a good thing, for ships, economies, and governments" (whatreallyhappened.com).

Arguments such as these prove just how important a decision it would be. But that does not mean it should be avoided – that could be even more detrimental. We have already seen the inability of nation-states to work together and make big decisions, not only in relation to the environment but also with regards military action. Despite no international agreement to go to war in Iraq, the United States and its allies were able to remove its government and, in the process, kill so many innocent civilians that we will never know exactly how many were killed. This, in itself, is reason to create a world government. The problem is representation. The United States, currently the world's only major superpower, could dominate a world government and therefore further enable its culture to seep into other cultures. These are big questions – ones that I am unable to address alone – but that need to be answered if one day we are to aspire to reach the standards of a society such as 'the Culture'.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the introduction, the principle conclusion is that a world government, with limited powers, is required in order to preserve and strengthen the unity of the human race. This will enable us all to grow and prosper in every way. However, this must not be done to the detriment of cultural differences. This must not be an autocratic, self-serving and all-powerful organization, but instead be one that serves all people and aims to promote all interests in a way that harms as few people as possible. It is

necessary in order to halt the current system's ability to crush cultural differences and replace them with homogeneity.

The problem, however, is that it is an extremely difficult and complex task to accomplish. The role of science fiction is to help us to consider different possibilities and to visualize the potential pitfalls of each approach. When the decision to create a world government comes, we must be ready for it. This means we have an incredible amount of research to do in order to ensure that it is done in a way that causes as little harm as possible. It could be one of the most important decisions in human history, deciding whether we survive beyond the lifespan of our planet. But in order for it to be successful, the majority of individuals and all groups at every spatial scale must be represented in a way that they are comfortable with.

One possible recommendation I can provide would be to examine the works of science fiction written by a variety of ethnic groups and nationalities, as this will demonstrate the wide range of visions held among people within and away from others. Many articles have been written in the 'Science Fiction Studies' journal about, for example, 'Czech SF in the Last Forty Years' as per Adamovic,, and a comparison of different approaches and ideas by authors in different countries is likely to provide numerous insights. Another possibility is to conduct quantitative research among, for example, different ethnic groups in order to obtain their opinions on globalization, culture and the links with science fiction. The possibilities are endless, but we must find the most appropriate one soon as we cannot know for sure when we will need it.

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