

Rob Jenkins

Global views can be short-sighted

When people speak of "the globalisation of publishing" they are usually referring to trends such as international mergers among publishing firms or the implications of internet publishing. But there is another, more literal, dimension to this phrase: the emergence of an entire publishing sub-sector devoted to analyses of globalisation. Even at the academic end of the market there is great diversity.

The five books under review here are just the tip of this academic iceberg, but a fairly representative one, each corresponding to a particular genre.

Jan Aart Scholte's *Globalisation: A Critical Introduction* is a textbook targeted at undergraduates. Its 12 chapters are organised around a standard three-part structure consisting of theory, processes and policy issues, complete with boxes at the beginning of each chapter indicating the "main points" and also, occasionally, "summary" boxes at the close. These are reasonably well designed.

The problem is that Scholte's inclination is to pursue clearly his own line of argument

throughout. This would be fine for a different sort of book. In this case, however, it undermines the ostensible purpose of introducing students to competing viewpoints in debates on globalisation. In discussing sovereignty, for instance, Scholte gives extremely short shrift to a whole body of literature that argues that state sovereignty is changing in form, rather than simply declining or disappearing. Instead of providing a sense of the basis upon which various authors have made this claim, Scholte dismissively mentions some before doggedly pursuing his own view — that sovereignty is, by definition, indivisible and therefore all theories of its "transformation" are fundamentally misguided. Whether he is right is irrelevant (my view is that he is not), the point is that this "Critical Introduction" to globalisation is critical to the point of overshadowing its otherwise considerable qualities as an introductory text. Textbooks need not be neutral, but they require fairer sifting of competing theoretical perspectives.

Globalisation and the Challenges of a New Century is an anthology of previously pub-

Globalisation: A Critical Introduction

FIRST EDITION

By Jan Aart Scholte

Palgrave (formerly Macmillan Press), 361pp, £45.00 and £14.99
ISBN 0 333 66021 8 and 66022 6

Globalisation and the Challenges of a New Century: A Reader

FIRST EDITION

Edited by Patrick O'Meara, Howard Mehlinger and Matthew Krain

Indiana University Press, 500pp, £34.00 and £13.50
ISBN 0 253 33658 8 and 21355 X

Globalisation and International Relations Theory

FIRST EDITION

By Ian Clark

Oxford University Press, 197pp, £40.00 and £15.99
ISBN 0 019878210 1 and 878209 8

Political Economy and the Changing Global Order

SECOND EDITION

Edited by Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R. D. Underhill

Oxford University Press, 422pp, £18.99

ISBN 0 195 41464 0

The Political Economy of Globalisation

FIRST EDITION

Edited by Ngaire Woods

Palgrave (formerly Macmillan Press), 230pp, £45.00 and £14.99
ISBN 0 333 73234 5 and 73235 3

manager rather than more words from the familiar voices of the western business scene.

The great strength of the editors' selection, however, is that it tends towards fairly accessible texts. This means that more than a third of the 38 articles are from either *Foreign Policy* or *Foreign Affairs*, the two main foreign policy establishment publications in the United States. Even for those who find this unproblematic, the book's excessive reliance on sources such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Atlantic Monthly* and the neo-conservative *National Interest* (all American) make for rather predictable mainstream fare, even when hyped as ground breaking. But for those who need a more gentle point of entry into contentious debates, these can be very useful additions to teaching curricula.

Ian Clark's book, *Globalisation and International Relations Theory*, is the by now familiar "rethinking theory" text. It is designed to appeal to advanced undergraduates as well as to postgraduate students, and the writing is appropriately gauged. The text seeks to overcome the great divide between theories of change that emphasise domestic factors and those that highlight the importance of

admitted as much, but instead the reader is informed that the collection of essays will help to overturn three key orthodoxies: that the political and economic domains can be effectively separated analytically; that state and market are autonomous spheres; and that domestic and international levels of political analysis can be clearly distinguished.

Unfortunately, as set forth in the editorial introduction, they resemble three straw men rather than three orthodoxies in need of correction. Indeed, they are far from orthodoxies that have already been undermined and the contributors' chapters do little to further existing lines of critique.

The organisation of the volume is also problematic. The chapters are sorted into four categories, each of which is prefaced by an editorial note. Unfortunately, the chapters and categories do not necessarily correspond. For instance, Hveem's "Explaining the real phenomenon in an era of globalisation" should have been placed in the "Regional dynamics" section rather than "Understanding the changing global order". The same goes for most of the other articles. The overwhelming impression is that

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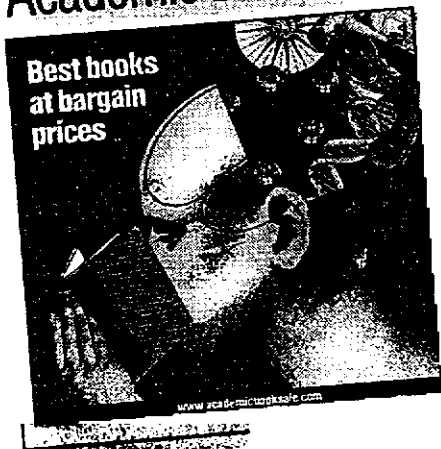
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lished articles. Fortunately for the editors, globalisation is a capacious rubric, within which most issues can be safely accommodated. With so much eligible for inclusion, an anthology on globalisation cannot easily be faulted for excluding one or another perspective. A more serious hazard is the potential for producing a "greatest-hits" compilation. Presumably to avoid this pitfall, the editors have opted to include some rather off-beat perspectives. So, in addition to Samuel Huntington's well-known "Clash of civilisations" article and Francis Fukuyama's equally renowned "End of history" think-piece, we also find more idiosyncratic contributions.

While the editors' quest for novelty is admirable, the book would be more useful as a teaching text if its thematic sections contained at least one straightforward chapter that could contextualise the more niche-oriented articles. Thus, the business-related articles could have used something by someone, such as John Dunning, who could provide an overview of the forces driving change in the nature of the firm. Instead, we find articles on e-business that will almost certainly have a brief shelf life. The environment-related articles show signs of greater staying power, but there could have been at least one piece discussing, for instance, basic economic ideas underlying the study of cross-border environmental issues. At the same time, the editors should be congratulated for moving beyond the established canon of political economy to include writings by environmentalists (and not just environmental economists) and one piece by an Indian corporate

theories of change that emphasise domestic factors and those that highlight the importance of international forces.

In discussing his case material, Clark sets the stage for a thorough assessment of the continuing relevance of the major theoretical traditions in the study of international relations. Thus, students can be introduced simultaneously to key debates in the study of globalisation — particularly those concerning the nature of the state — and to the main schools of international relations theory. This is certainly an advantage for tutors who need to cover a huge amount of ground in contemporary issues of a transnational nature (financial market integration, the functioning of international organisations, and so on) and do not wish to go into great detail on international relations theory. In fact, while Clark concludes that his analysis supports the continued relevance of international relations theory (particularly the somewhat obscure "constructivist" school), the main body of the text raises doubts about this. This is a good thing, from a teaching perspective, as it provides a basis for student debates.

Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey Underhill have produced a new edition of their popular edited collection of the mid-1990s. All but two or three articles have been commissioned specifically for this volume, which begs the question, why is this to be considered a second edition at all? Why is it not simply a new book? The curious thing, however, is that while the editors are careful to avoid the appearance of marketing a reread of their earlier book, there is, nevertheless, a decided lack of intellectual innovation. This would not be a major problem if the editors

order. The same goes for many of the other articles. The overwhelming impression is that these are rather omnibus categories, presented as thematically related and connected to a larger editorial vision — but actually something of a hodgepodge. Some of it is quite good, but most of the articles are decidedly unimpressive.

Ngairé Woods's edited volume is, in a sense, the reverse image of the Stubbs and Underhill collection. It purports (in the preface) to be motivated by the need for a teaching text but is, in fact, a very good collection of essays on very specific topics, such as foreign direct investment and global civil society, written by experts in their fields. It was originally put together as a special issue of an academic journal. The Stubbs and Underhill text, on the other hand, has pretensions to greater academic originality, but is in fact geared towards a lower intellectual level. Woods has managed to get the volume's contributors to remain focused on a set of common concerns, while allowing them to explore the subtleties arising from their individual research agendas. The result is a far more satisfying set of papers. These will give students a much better feel for the contours of contemporary scholarship than many of the contributions in the other volumes under review. Thus, ironically, the book that least resembles the standard teaching text ends up doing the best job of creating accessible points of entry for serious student engagement with unresolved issues. Let this be a lesson to all academics seeking to address the textbook market

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