Neither pragmatic adaptation nor misguided accommodation: Modernisation as domination in the Chilean and British Left

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This article contests prevailing academic conceptions of the modernisation of parliamentary Left parties. According to these accounts, 'modernisation' is viewed either as a pragmatic adaptation to international socioeconomic change, or as a misguided accommodation of ascendant neoliberal values, norms and practices. In both of these accounts, Left parties are perceived as passively reacting to the structures that contextualise their actions. Developing a neo-Gramscian perspective and using the Chilean Socialist Party and the British Labour Party as examples, we argue that modernisation can be more adequately conceptualised as the process by which Left parties operate within the contemporary neoliberal historical bloc, actively contributing to the (re)production of neoliberal hegemony.

Introduction

During the 1980s and 1990s, most Left parties underwent a process of modernisation, after which they increasingly moderated their political aims and

turned away from emancipatory and egalitarian goals towards programmes that emphasised the facilitative, managerial and/ or ameliorative role of public institutions. The academic literature is divided over the degree to which these modernised Left parties retain a redistributive and potentially transformative role. On the one hand, scholars with a sympathetic leaning towards the modernisation process tend to view it as the pragmatic adaptation of traditional leftist aims, ensuring the continued relevance of those aims within the contemporary social and economic context. For instance, Giddens argues, 'Far from displacing social justice and solidarity, third way politics … represents the only effective means of pursuing these ideals today' (Giddens, 2000: 29). Similarly, Panizza argues that 'there is little room in the [Latin American] region for an anti-systemic model and … instead the emphasis should be placed in making states, markets and democracy work to better represent the people, promote development, address social demands and attack the root causes of discrimination and inequality' (Panizza, 2005: 730).

According to this perspective, the commitment of left-wing parties to traditional concerns such as equality remains an important goal; but the contemporary requirements of the market and democracy require that it be conceptualised and implemented in alternative ways.

On the other hand, those with a less sympathetic view see modernisation as an *unnecessary* rejection of traditional redistributive and/or transformative aims and values, and as an 'accommodation' of ascendant international neoliberal values (Hay, 1997; Watson & Hay, 2003). For instance, Moulian argues that the Chilean Left has abandoned its progressive role and developed instead an 'end of history' discourse in which globalisation is assumed to be a naturalised phenomenon, while traditional social democracy and democratic socialism are *inaccurately* viewed as outdated and dangerous (Moulian, 1998: 50–61). 'Modernisation' is therefore portrayed as the abandonment of macro-level redistributive and/or socially transformative aims by Left parties' elites and mass memberships, who mistakenly view modernisation as the only viable political agenda. It thereby represents a *misguided* (because it is unnecessary) accommodation of the demands of the market.[1]

This article presents an alternative perspective. In each of the approaches outlined above, the modernisation of Left

parties is portrayed as a passive *reaction* to changes within political, economic and social 'structures' (whether that reaction is viewed as necessarily pragmatic *or* unnecessarily acquiescent). As a result, the *pragmatic adaptation* accounts of modernisation theorise a structurally determined process that removes the potential of political agency to change and transform neoliberal capitalism, thereby reinforcing an 'end of history' discourse that helps to maintain the disarticulation of alternatives. On the other hand, the *unnecessary accommodation* perspective posits a form of subjective idealism that underestimates the obstacles to counter-hegemonic movements within modernised Left parties. With this article, we would like to suggest that it is possible to gain a more insightful account into the modernisation of Left parties through a consideration of the active *impact of* those parties' political agency upon the political, social and economic contexts within which they are located. Our approach, therefore, is to seek to understand the reproduction of historicised social structures *and* the role of agents in reproducing those structures. In this way, we hope to produce an account that helps to develop a concrete historical understanding of modernised Left parties' relationship with neoliberalism, and the impact that this relationship has had on the possibilities for counter-hegemonic struggle within those parties. We argue that modernisation should be seen as a process of exclusion and domination on the part of the elites of Left parties, acting to uphold, bolster and reproduce existing hierarchies within contemporary capitalist society. The modernisation of Left parties, therefore, is portrayed neither as the pragmatic adaptation of social-democratic values to a changed context, nor as a misinformed accommodation of ascendant neoliberal values; but rather as the abandonment of Left parties' historical attempt to contest (instead of actively reproducing) the hierarchies that constitute capitalism. This abandonment has led to their incorporation as active agents in the reproduction and hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. This argument is made with specific reference to the case of the Chilean Socialist Party (PSCh), and to that of the British Labour Party (BLP).

Parties in society: A neo-Gramscian approach

In seeking to assess the impact of Left parties on (rather than their reaction to) their wider social contexts, neo-

Gramscian perspectives can offer particularly useful insights.[2] First, neo-Gramscian perspectives seek to understand the wider, extra-state relations (or 'civil society') that constitute and uphold states (Gramsci, 1971: 261–3; see also, from an international political economy perspective, Morton, 2006: 65). In doing so, they identify the interrelations between political agency and the structures within which that agency is constructed and conducted. They therefore raise important methodological issues that are relevant to our present investigation into the interrelations between Left parties and their wider social contexts. Second, Gramsci sought to develop a *historicised* account of the production and reproduction of social order—in other words, an account that pertained to the concrete-particular relations that constituted contemporary social reality (Cox, 1993: 50). This approach is of use in our attempt to understand historically specific change, and the way the construction of social order is mediated by a number of state–society relationships, and is the outcome of struggles to determine the nature of that social order. Third, Gramsci problematised the emancipatory role of Left parties, arguing that they have the potential to exercise hegemonic *or* counter-hegemonic pressures (Gramsci, 1971: 155), depending on existing forms of social interaction and the balance of class power (Gramsci, 1971: 210–8). His approach can therefore inform our attempt here to assess the role of contemporary Left parties in reproducing the social contexts within which they are based.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci famously sought to understand how, despite the conflict-ridden, antagonistic and exploitative nature of capitalism, the capitalist ruling elite could apparently secure the support of significant sections of its subaltern base. In answering this question, Gramsci argued that the stability and survival of capitalist society is often secured through the production of consent among the subaltern classes by the dominant class through mechanisms of co-optation, disarticulation and the construction of an ideational consensus that naturalises the current organisation of social relations. This, for Gramsci, is the production of hegemony, whereby '"spontaneous" consent [is] given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' (Gramsci, 1971: 12). Hegemony, therefore, refers to the *creation of* consent and consensus, often through the inculcation of a 'common sense' that naturalises and

normalises existing power relations, upholding hierarchical relations between ruler and ruled, exploiter and exploited, and thereby *partly* replacing the role of coercion within that relationship.

For Gramsci, the successful achievement of hegemony by a dominant class presupposes the establishment of a historical bloc, whereby a unity is constructed between multiple political and social forces. This is based upon a successful political, social and ideological struggle that secures the construction and widespread internalisation of a universal ideology and practice, 'which brings the interests of the leading class into harmony with those of subordinate classes' (Cox, 1993: 57). Hegemony is therefore the means through which consent is produced despite unequal power relations, realised through the constitution of a historical bloc that is created and maintained through a series of mediations between state and society. In understanding the production (or absence) of historically specific hegemonic relations, therefore, we are interested in investigating three particular moments: the integration of Left parties into dominant power networks; the adoption and promotion of a series of ideas and norms that seek to justify and naturalise that domination; and the disarticulation and de-legitimisation of potentially counter-hegemonic actors, interests and practices.

In building on this discussion, we argue that a series of political, ideological and social defeats substantially weakened the subaltern classes' capacity for political agency during the late-1970s and the 1980s in both Chile and the UK, witnessing the creation of a neoliberal historical bloc in both cases. In response, the leaderships of both countries' Left parties have sought to operate within that historical bloc, thereby acting within (rather than against) existing power relations. The modernisation of Left parties, therefore, has witnessed their becoming agents of—rather than a potential source of resistance to—neoliberal hegemonic reproduction. We explore this process in neo-Gramscian terms of: (1) the insertion of Left parties into networks that constitute the neoliberal historical bloc in each case; (2) the adoption and promotion of neoliberal ideas, norms and practices; and (3) the exclusion and de-legitimisation of counter-hegemonic actors, interests and practices that represent a potential threat to the hegemony of the contemporary neoliberal historical bloc. In contrast to

existing approaches, therefore, the mod-ernisation of Left parties is portrayed here as both an abandonment (rather than an adaptation) of traditional counter-hegemonic aims, *and* an adoption and promotion (rather than a misguided accommodation) of neoliberal values and practices.

Chile and Britain: A comparison

In conducting this investigation into the modernisation of Left parties, we have chosen to compare the cases of the PSCh and the BLP. We have done this for three principle reasons. First, we seek to complement contemporary neo-Gramscian studies of the construction of a neoliberal historical bloc within the current international political economy (Cox, 1987, 1993; Davies, 1999; Morton, 2003b). While these existing studies have facilitated an understanding of the development of neoliberal hegemony at the international level, focusing in particular on the role of international institutions and the USA as the global hegemon, we aim in this article to provide a 'bottom-up' approach, which concentrates on national conflicts, actors and struggles involved in the construction of neoliberal hegemony within the (inter)national neoliberal historical bloc(s) (see Worth, 2005, for further discussion of this approach). Second, in focusing on two parties that differ significantly with regard to the locations of their national contexts within the international division of labour, their ideological and political traditions, and their experiences in opposition during the initial stage of neoliberalisation, we seek to understand how particular developments occur within, and as part of, general (inter)national phenomena. We seek, therefore, to understand both common and different trends within the particular development of modernised Left parties in the cases of Chile and Britain, as part of what we view (from a neo-Gramscian perspective) as a generalised process witnessing the construction of international neoliberal hegemony. In this way, we hope to 'distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed "conjunctural" (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental)' (Gramsci, 1971: 177).

Finally, Chile and Britain have been chosen because in both countries the main Left parties were elected to office following a prolonged period of neoliberal restructuring—under Pinochet and Thatcher, respectively (for a comparison

of these two processes, see Harvey, 2005). The choice of Chile and Britain therefore allows a consideration of the way Left parties sought to operate in contexts in which neo-liberalisation was initially constructed through a 'passive revolution', without the consent of large sections of the subaltern classes. This reflects our interest in the role of Left parties (with their tradition of being the institutional expression of the subaltern classes) in consolidating existing neoliberal historical blocs by their role in the construction of neoliberal hegemony, including consent from the subaltern classes. Moreover, the PSCh and BLP both conducted a substantial programmatic and organisational renewal as part of their attempt to adapt to neoliberal restructuring. In focusing on these two parties, therefore, we are able to compare Left parties that have undergone the process of modernisation, and which therefore provide some of the clearest indications of the types of process set in motion by modernised Left parties operating within neoliberal historical blocs. Both parties, therefore, exemplify the process of Left party modernisation in relation to the con-struction of neo-liberal hegemony that we seek to investigate here.

Contextualising the neoliberal historical bloc

Before entering into an analysis of the modernisation of the PSCh and the BLP, it is necessary first to briefly discuss the prior construction of the neoliberal historical bloc that forms the historical and political context faced by both parties during their period of modernisation. In the case of the PSCh, between 1973 and 1989 the Pinochet dictatorship undertook the first experiment in neoliberal restructuring in Chile. This restructuring undermined the structural moorings, ideological legitimacy and institutional existence of the Chilean Left (Munizaga 1988: 16–20), creating conditions in which the Chilean democratic opposition was in a weakened and defensive institutional position in relation to the authoritarian regime. This was compounded by the partial internalisation by the Accion Democratica (AD) opposition movement—which became the cross-party basis for the future democratic coalition government, the 'Concertación'—of the logic of the Pinochet regime in its anti-Marxism and its normalisation of the rationality of a neoliberal accumulation strategy (see Núñez, 1991; Tironi, 1988; Vidal, 1995; Gazmuri, 2000: 314–35; Motta, 2005: 225–31). This led to a strategic

decision on the part of the AD to focus on elite pacts as opposed to the mobilisation of its social base, in order to facilitate regime change (Roberts, 1998; Motta, 2005: 152–235). For this reason, the AD was unable to determine either the timing or the content of the democratic transition in 1989 (Moulian, 1997: 50–60), which was marked by conservatism and continuity, based on an institutional hybrid that protected and enshrined the power of the political Right and the armed forces, and institutionalised the neoliberal accumulation strategy within the Chilean constitution (Barrett, 2001). The governing Concertación, in office since 1990, includes the PSCh and has been led by a cross-party elite that applauds consumerism and neoliberalism; that seeks to systematically exclude and de-legitimise proponents of alternatives to this consensus; and that actively undermines opportunities for increased democratic input into the policy-making process (Barrett, 2001: 91–94; Moulian, 1997: 61–65).

In the case of Britain, the Labour Party experienced policy failure and a breakdown in its relations with its core trade-union constituency while in office from 1974 to 1979 (Coates, 1980). This combined with the popularity within key sectors of the British electorate of the Thatcher/Major governments between 1979 and 1992 to produce a prolonged period out of office. During this period, the Conservative government was able to implement a policy of neoliberal restructuring that included anti-union legislation, privatisation, and the abandonment of low unemployment as a short-term policy goal. This created a context in which the market was increasingly favoured over the state as a means of allocating resources; in which the role of trade unions was successfully eroded and delegitimised for an influential section of the population; in which there was a reduction in the level of support for redistributive fiscal measures; and in which the capacity of the state was successfully downscaled (Gamble, 1994).

Modernisation as domination?

What follows is an attempt to outline the modernisation processes of the PSCh and BLP in the light of the contextual events introduced above. The investigation is ordered in accordance with the three expressions of neoliberal hegemonic reproduction identified by the neo-Gramscian perspective outlined above: (1) the insertion of Left parties

into networks that constitute the neoliberal hist-orical bloc; (2) the adoption and promotion of neoliberal ideas, norms and practices; and (3) the exclusion and de-legitimisation of counter-hegemonic actors, interests and practices that represent a potential threat to the hegemony of the contemporary neoliberal historical bloc.

The integration of Left parties into neoliberal power networks

The modernisation process undertaken by both the PSCh and the BLP has in each case seen the integration of the parties into what we can term 'neoliberal power networks', meaning networks of actors empowered through their incorporation within the neoliberal historical bloc which they in part constitute. Thus, in the case of the PSCh, there have been explicit attempts to ensure good relations with both the private sector and the armed forces. For instance, upon its election to office, the cross-party leadership of the Concertación began to promote a discourse of collaboration between business and labour, justified by the idea of social 'concertacion' and modernisation, which included the strengthening of the technical, as opposed to political, role of trade unions (Falabella & Campero, 1991: 145). Likewise, the content and structure of policy-making within the Concertación in Chile, in which the PSCh is a central partner, is characterised by the de facto prominence of actors such as business elites and the armed forces. *Closed* discussions, for example, over the timing and content of proposed taxation and labour reforms; reforms to the 'authoritarian enclaves' agreed in the transition to democracy; justice for the disappeared; and acceptance of the free-trade treaty with the USA, have all become informally institutionalised (Cavallo, 1998: 100–200; Motta, 2005: 22–28). The power of the social forces at the heart of the neoliberal historic bloc have therefore been strengthened under the Concertación. This is particularly the case for business elites (especially those involved in export industries), the armed forces, and the political Right (Jocelyn-Holt, 2001: 240–263; González, 2003: 140–142).

In the case of the BLP, there have been clear attempts to align itself with the business elite in the UK, claiming, in its 2001 manifesto: 'we must make Britain the best place to

do business in Europe' (Labour Party, 2001: 8). This process began during Neil Kinnock's leadership of the party, when he sought to strengthen ties with business and increase corporate donations, particularly through the revived Labour Finance and Industry Group, which was supplemented in the early 1990s with the creation of the Labour Industry Forum and the High Value Donors Unit (Osler, 2002: 19, 66; Ludlam, 2004: 72). Throughout the period of its modernisation, the Labour Party has acquired a large range of associations with individuals with business interests and/or identities, many of whom play (or have played) an important role in the operation of the Party and/or the government. These include Geoffrey Robinson, Lord Sainsbury, Lord Simon, Derek Wanless, Martin Taylor, and Lord Drayson (Osler, 2002). Moreover, these associations are heralded by the leadership of the party with statements such as: 'since 1997, Labour in government has worked in partnership with business to the benefit of the people of Britain' (Blair, Brown and Hewitt, 2005: 5). Further, the heightened integration of the BLP leadership elite with business interests has been evinced in its policy-making while in office. This has particularly been the case with its use of policy 'taskforces', which create managed and exclusive forums for deliberation over policy direction and detail. Thus, of the 3,103 appointments to the first 259 government taskforces, 2 per cent of appointees were drawn from trade unions, and 35 per cent were business leaders; and in Treasury taskforces, 96 out of 108 places were filled by business leaders (Ludlam, 2004: 72). Similarly, in the government's adoption of initiatives such as 'city academies' and PPP/PFI (public–private partnerships and private finance initiatives), business interests occupy in its policy-making (Driver & Martell, 2002: 44–5; Barratt Brown, 2001: 29–39).

Rather than being a passive adaptation to or accommodation of their neoliberal context, therefore, we have witnessed the active insertion of Left parties into, and their reproduction of, the neoliberal historical blocs of which each is now an integral part. While in the case of the UK this has largely taken the form of an incorporation of business representatives into government, in Chile's case there has been an association with the military elite, thereby reflecting the different protagonists in the historical process of neoliberalisation in each country.

The promotion of neoliberal 'common sense'

For Gramsci, the maintenance of a historical bloc requires the reproduction of neoliberal hegemony (including the inculcation of a neoliberal 'common sense'). And indeed, in the cases of both the PSCh and the BLP, we can witness the active promotion of the neoliberal hegemony that sustains the power relations of which they are a part. Thus, while both the PSCh and the BLP have integrated themselves into neoliberal power networks, they have also sought to promote ideas that justify and normalise those relations, therefore seeking to attain a degree of neoliberal hegemony that upholds the new power relations that they in part constitute. For instance, members of the exiled PSCh elite who later became key figures in two central leadership factions—the 'Megatendencia' and the 'Terceristas'—underwent an ideological revision while in exile that witnessed their rejection of socialism and the gradual normalisation of the rationality of a neoliberal accumulation strategy. They have since sought to create consent within the PSCh to the neoliberal restructuring implemented under Pinochet (Olavarría, 2003: 14–5, 22–6). This has included the successful identification of socialism with Stalinism, terrorism and authoritarianism: a view that was consolidated through the permitting of all internal party debate *except* that which included 'authoritarian', closed ideologies (meaning those that rejected the dominant neoliberal discourse). Members of the Megatendencia and Tercerista factions thereby ensured that the dominant neoliberal discourse of market economics and liberal democracy, bound within the constraints of globalisation, formed the boundaries of party discussion (Altamirano, 1990: 419). Thus, Socialist Party discourse began to adopt the language of efficiency and competitiveness, and to stress the need for social consensus in order to maintain macroeconomic stability (see Escalona, 1997a; Ominami, 1995; Candia, 1990; Barrett, 2001: 50–60).

The pattern of decision-making under the Concertación has also increasingly produced a class of policy-makers strongly committed to the neoliberal mode of decision-making. Indeed, the technification of Chilean politics under the Concertación has also increasingly produced a new type of party member - young, professional and with positions in the state bureacracy. (We use the term 'technification' in order to refer to the increasing characterisation of politics

and policy-making as specialised, technical matters that need to be dealt with by experts of Chilean politics under the Concertación). They are 'modernised', internationalised and bereft of much of the party culture, tradition and ideological rhetoric that characterises their contemporaries in the party base.[3] This 'new layer' of professionalised party members expresses and reproduces the success of the neoliberal historic bloc in universalising its particular interest among the subaltern classes and, by doing so, in normalising neoliberalism as an accumulation strategy, and the market as the natural basis of social relations. This lack of reflexive thinking or critical discussion undermines the development of collective action around common goals and beliefs, resulting in a climate of opportunism and individualism, with many new members joining the party as a means of ensuring a political career.[4] For example, when Socialist Youth (Joventud Socialista—'JS') central committee members were asked what the differences were between the tendencies they belonged to they had no answer, claiming that it was really a question of who one knew and the networks one was in.[5] This institutionalises a layer of high-level party bureaucracy, embedding the disarticulation of counter-hegemonic struggle within the institutions of the party, while the ideological and institutional tools necessary for the reconstruction of a collective contestation of neoliberalism—or imagining of alternatives to neoliberalism—are disembedded.

Within the BLP, a similar adoption and promotion of a neoliberal 'common sense' has characterised its period of modernisation. Thus, following the Labour Party's electoral defeat in 1983, party leader Neil Kinnock and a core group of party reformers working with him[6] sought to significantly de-radicalise party policy, and to adopt a more pro-business party programme (Shaw, 1993). This reform process was accelerated following Tony Blair's election as leader in 1994—a process most clearly symbolised by the revision of Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution, which committed the Labour Party to 'the enterprise of the market and rigour of competition'. Indeed, Blair and his team of New Labour modernisers[7] persuaded a large section of the Labour Party to support a much more explicitly pro-business and neoliberal agenda, including in particular a commitment to the efficiency and effectiveness of the market, and of private-sector managerial techniques. The successful depiction of alternatives to this agenda as inefficient and part of 'old

Labour' was an important part of this conversion (Finlayson, 2003: 79–82). It was also possible to portray neoliberal policies as the most effective means with which to realise more 'traditional' aims such as welfare provision, employment, and economic growth (see Mandelson & Liddle, 1996), thereby seeking to ensure their acceptance across the party constituency.

In both cases, the revisions achieved within party ideology have been successfully carried over into office. Thus, in the case of the Concertación, there has been an attempt to remove certain key (particularly economic) institutions from democratic decision-making in an attempt to depoliticise and naturalise the neoliberal accumulation strategy in the logic of the activities of those embedded within the state (Teivainen, 2002: 1–10). This has been justified both by the allocation of decisions to 'objective' and scientific technocrats (Montecinos, 1998), and by reference to the politicisation of economic policy-making during the Popular Unity government (1970–1973) (which, it is claimed, led to the coup and the seventeen-year dictatorship) (Illanes, 2002: 191–224). Moreover, in accordance with its declared goal of competitiveness and enhanced ability to attract foreign direct investment, the economic policy implemented under the government of President Lagos was more fiscally restrictive than had been the policies of the Pinochet regime from the mid-1980s, leaving Chile a country with one of the most unequal distributions of wealth to be found in the world, one of the highest levels of working hours, and with a set of labour laws that have been only slightly modified since the time of the dictatorship (Barton, 2002: 370–372).

In the case of the BLP, its promotion of neoliberal 'common sense' while in office has particularly centred on an espousal of the importance and universal value of work. For instance, the 'welfare-to-work' scheme sought to encourage (and in some cases obliged) welfare recipients to take part in schemes designed to prepare them for work. In this way, the govern-ment demarcated the 'deserving' poor (those individuals who were poor despite their best efforts to secure paid work, es-pecially working families) and the 'undeserving' poor. Thus in introducing the government's Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill in 1999, Alastair Darling, the secretary of state for social security, claimed, 'We will end the something-for-nothing approach that has characterised the past' (quoted in Wickham-Jones,

2003: 33). It was this thinking that led to the creation of both the Working Families' Tax Credit and the minimum wage—and to record high levels of poverty for working-age adults without children by 2002–3, and the denial of financial support for asylum seekers between January 2003 and June 2004 (Hills & Stewart, 2005). The principle of rewarding and providing incentives for work as a means to legitimise social hierarchies has formed a core part of the BLP's 'common sense' throughout its modern-isation. Thus Mandelson and Liddle claimed in 1996: 'New Labour should use the tax system to attack unjustified privilege, *without weakening incentives for risk-taking and hard work*' (Mandelson & Liddle, 1996: 23; emphasis added). Further, in the presentation of its policies the Labour government has tended to emphasise the value of policy delivery over the process of decision-making, thereby further depoliticising the policy-making process (witness, for instance, the justification of PFI in terms of its pragmatic production of efficient and effective policy outcomes, and the decision to grant operational independence to the monetary policy committee of the Bank of England). Finally, the New Labour leadership has repeatedly insisted on the importance of market-liberalising reforms as a necessary means for remaining competitive within the international economy (Watson & Hay, 2003).

Alongside its emphasis on the universal merit of work, the Labour government has also sought to emphasise the equally universal value of the upholding of law and order. Thus, in its introduction of increasingly authoritarian legislation and policies including ASBOs (anti-social behaviour orders), child curfews, identity cards (with the intention of making them compulsory in the future), and the rise to the highest recorded level ever of inmates in British prisons, the government has sought to portray itself as protecting and upholding universal values that will benefit society as a whole. For instance, in introducing its 2005 Terrorism Bill (which sought to permit the detention of suspected terrorists without trial for up to ninety days), Charles Clarke, the home secretary at the time, pointed to 'the values that we here seek to defend: valuing and building free speech and freedom of expression, wanting every citizen to have a democratic stake in our society; valuing the free economy which has built prosperity' (Hansard, 26 October 2005, col. 323).

There is, thus, a clear disciplinary element to much of New Labour's policy-making, in which dissent or deviance is portrayed as detrimental to the well-being of British society as a whole. Implicit in much of this disciplinary agenda is the view that *social* problems are the result of *individual* failure. Thus Blair, in launching the 'Respect Action Plan' in January 2006, which sought to increase the use of parenting orders, tackle problem families, reduce truancy and introduce a 'community payback' scheme for 'anti-social' offences, claimed 'there are still intractable problems with the behaviour of some individuals and families, behaviour which can make life a misery for others, particularly in the most disadvantaged communities' (Blair, 2006: 1).

In comparing the cases of the PSCh and the BLP, therefore, we have witnessed a similar promotion of a neoliberal 'common sense' in each. In each case, this has been characterised by the active inculcation of neoliberal values rather than by a passive adaptation to or accommodation of them. Thus there has been a clear attempt to legitimise the existence of contemporary hierarchies, with a particular focus on the merit of 'expert', depoliticised decision-making, the necessity of neoliberal adaptation to international economic competitiveness, and on the discrediting of alternatives to neoliberalism (this latter point will be dealt with more fully in the next section). However, in both cases the particular historical experience of each party has also produced different trajectories for the development of this neoliberal 'common sense'. Thus in the case of Chile, the merit of neoliberalism is routinely juxtaposed with the threat of the political and social instability that was (purportedly) prompted by radical socialist initiatives in the past. Within the BLP, in contrast, it is the inefficiency of heavy-handed, bureaucratic state intervention and the electoral defeats of 'old' Labour that represent the (undesirable) alternatives to New Labour's neoliberal 'common sense'.

The disarticulation of counter-hegemonic alternatives

As touched on in the previous section, it is perhaps in ensuring the de-legitimisation, disarticulation and exclusion of alternatives to neoliberalism in which both the PSCh and the BLP have been most active in the reproduction of their respective neoliberal historical blocs. Thus both parties have been particularly successful in excluding advocates of alter-

natives to neoliberalism from access to influence within their parties and states, and in de-legitimising those ideas that run counter to neoliberalism. In the case of the PSCh, the dominance of the Megatendencia and Tercerista factions has enabled them to exclude opponents to neoliberalism from positions of power within the PSCh. In particular, Nueva Izquierda (NI)—which contained members of the mass base in social and union movements, as well as sections of the leadership, and which was publicly committed to both the symbols and ideas of socialism—was excluded from the PSCh's central decision-making institutions, the central committee and the general council in 1990. This effectively marginalised it from power within the first Concertación government (1990–1994) (González, 2003: 140–2). Further, control over these central party organs was also used in order to allocate posts within the party, thereby consolidating the exclusion of dissident politicians and members (Escalona, 1990; Jocelyn-Holt, 2001: 222–3). This exclusion ultimately led the NI to accept its traditional identity as being outdated, closed and anti-democratic (Escalona, 1997a: 9–19). It subsequently began to articulate a discourse compatible with the logic of a neoliberal accumulation strategy, in which globalisation became inevitable, the economic policy of the government was successful, and collective struggle was replaced by postmodern particularity (Escalona, 1997a: 9–19; Escalona, 1997b: 21–23). Further, the practice of NI elites began to mirror that of other dominant elites, with Camilo Escalona, an important NI deputy within the party, participating in numerous closed negotiations to distribute power inside the party and smooth over differences within the Concertación elite. This included sharp criticism, on Escalona's part, of dissenting PSCh deputies Navarro and Águilo, and his support for government minister Eyzaguirre following the critique of government economic policy published by PSCh senators and deputies in 2002 (see, for instance, Escalona, 2003; Cavallo, 1998: 65–95; PSCh, 2003a, 2003b).

Moreover, the centralisation of power within the PSCh was consolidated further during the second half of the 1990s through a number of internal reforms. The effect of one of these was to ensure that decisions made at general conferences would no longer be binding on party individuals in government. Similarly, changes in internal election rules in 1996 and 1998 gave the PSCh's internal groupings more

power to determine the key figures in the general council, which itself was now indirectly elected by the central committee (as opposed to being directly elected by congress delegates). Further, the selection process of electoral candidates became heavily determined by the party leadership, with the proposed candidate needing two-thirds approval from the central committee, but only 20 per cent support from the region or municipality she intended to represent (PSCh, 1998; see Olivarria, 2003: 22–6). This trend was exacerbated, despite the election of the central committee on the basis of 'one member, one vote', by the selection of candidates by tendencies such as the Megatendencia. Moreover, proposals for policy committees or strategic development were either under-developed or forgotten, and even when proposals were developed, the party leadership in government could legitimately ignore them.[8] This hollowing-out of internal party democracy also witnessed the non-functioning of many Socialist Party *comunas* (local branches), the absence of an internal party information network (which resulted in *comunas* and regional leaderships lacking knowledge of leadership decisions), and a minimal level of party training and education, resulting in a halving in the turn-out for internal party elections in 1996 in comparison with that of 1990 (Córtes-Terzi, 1996; Olavarría, 2003: 21–26).

In the case of the BLP, the exclusion of alternative voices within the party began with Kinnock's attack on (and subsequent purge of) the 'tendency tacticians' of the entryist and Trotskyite Militant Tendency at the 1985 party conference, in which all the potential opponents to party moderation were classified as members of the 'hard left' (quoted in Panitch & Leys, 2001: 227). This was followed by the formation of policy-review groups, which consisted mainly of NEC (national executive committee) and shadow cabinet members, and which significantly moderated party policy in the period from 1987 to 1989. In agreeing to these policy reforms, the Party Conference was only offered the chance to vote on the final documents, with no opportunity for revisions (Taylor, 1997). The introduction of the principle of 'one member, one vote' for the selection of prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) in 1993 ensured the centralisation of control over the selection of MPs through a concomitant tightening in the NEC's vetting of candidates (Quinn, 2004: 111). Following Blair's election as leader, party policy-

making was centralised still further, to the extent that policy documents had to be signed for at the beginning, and immediately returned at the end of NEC meetings (Panitch & Leys, 2001: 227; Davies, 2001), thereby effectively excluding those outside the inner circle of New Labour from having any input into the party policy-making process. The practice of legitimising centrally determined policies through Yes/No votes at the party confer-ence, or votes held between the party's entire membership (again, with no room for revisions), was also continued—witness the 1996 vote on the pre-manifesto programme. Finally, the introduction in 1997 of the 'Partnership into Power' reforms has allowed the modernising leadership further opportunities to control the policy agenda, replacing the traditional, bottom-up delegatory decision-making structure with a top-down plebiscitary one that grants the leadership significantly greater agenda-setting control, and the opportunity to isolate potential dissidents to party policy (Shaw, 2002; Davies, 2001). This exclusion of dissenters was routinely defended by the claim that dissent itself would be counter-productive: 'You will have a ready ear in the media to attack the Labour government. But I will tell the Labour Party where that leads. It leads to twenty years of Tory government' (Blair, NEC meeting, 17 November 1997; quoted in Davies, 2001: 35).

The process of centralising decision-making that has characterised both the PSCh and the BLP's periods of modernisation has also seen the specific exclusion from influence of trade unions and social movements. Thus the modernised PSCh has explicitly sought to distance itself from, and indeed to demobilise, trade unionists and social movements with which it had traditionally been aligned but which came to represent a potential alternative to the neoliberal consensus it currently promotes. For instance, dissident union leaders have been actively excluded from the pacted transition and from the negotiations regarding labour legislation and the economic reforms of the Concertación governments. This has resulted in a situation in which Chile has one of the highest levels of labour-market flexibility in the world and, concurrently, a disarticulated labour movement upon which neoliberalism's hegemony is reproduced (Guzman Concha, 2006: 13). The PSCh leadership also followed an explicit policy of demobilising social movements on the basis that any mobilisation or contestation would undermine the post-Pinochet democratic transition (Roberts,

1998). Thus the Concertación elites (including those from the PSCh) were explicitly critical of any mobilisation of social movements, especially those of the *pobladores* (shanty-town dwellers), who became the 'invalid participants' in the new democracy (Bresnahan, 2003: 3–8). Thus, as Richards argues, 'To be critical was sometimes portrayed by the government officials as anti-democratic' (Richards, 2004: 107). This desire for social stability and to limit public disquiet resulted in the leadership of the PSCh supporting the continuation of the Anti-Terrorist Law (a policy to uphold public order against terrorist threats, developed during the military regime); attacking strikes held by the port, health and telecommunications unions; and criminalising the protests of Mapuches and students on the grounds that they were illegitimate, causing chaos and uncertainty and undermining the national interest (Human Rights Watch, 2004; Tabilo, 2002). This has resulted in the exclusion and disarticulation of the popular movements that the PSCh once sought to represent, and helped secure the PSCh's role within the contemporary neoliberal historical bloc.

Under President Ricardo Lagos (PSCh), the Concertación government consolidated a style of policy-making that reduced participants to a small group of advisers and ministers—a style labelled '*el estilo Lagos*' which, while the government sought to present itself as democratic and open, in reality hid a process in which certain relevant representatives from Chilean society were excluded from policy and discussion (Torres, 2002; Valdes, 2002). Finally, the economic policies of the Concertación have resulted in the socioeconomic fragmentation of large sectors of the popular classes, and the individualisation of production relations. Many companies use outsourced or small, decentralised, unregulated production conditions in which workers have few or no labour rights—a trend which has itself undermined the structural moorings of popular class culture, identity and political organisation (Agacino, 2003: 41–69).

In the case of the British Labour Party, the share of party funding contributed by trade unions fell from 90 per cent in 1994 to 40 per cent in 1998 (Ludlam, 2004: 72). Similarly, unions donated 35 per cent of Labour's 2001 election campaign spending—half of what they contributed to the 1992 campaign (Osler, 2002: 11). This trend is also illustrated in the reduction in the size of the union vote at Labour's annual conference, from 90 per cent to 70 per cent in 1993,

and to 49 per cent two years later. This has normally been justified in terms of the role of trade unions in Labour's experience of prolonged electoral defeat: as Tony Blair said in a 1995 speech to the TGWU (Transport and General Workers Union) conference, 'There was a time when a large trade union would pass a policy and then it was assumed Labour would follow suit. Demands were made. Labour responded and negotiated. Those days are over. Gone' (cited in Blair, 1996: 133).

As well as distancing itself from trade unions, the modernised Labour Party also sought to distance itself from public-sector employees, particularly over the government's attempt to introduce private finance initiatives and public–private partnerships. The government was keen to emphasise its commitment to efficiency and effectiveness within a public sector it portrayed as resistant to change: 'You try getting change in the public sector and public services—I bear the scars on my back after two years in government' (Blair, in a speech to the British Venture Capital conference, July 1999).

Summary

In sum, the elites of the Chilean Socialist Party and the British Labour Party have been active political agents in the construction and reproduction of neoliberal hegemony in Chile and Britain, respectively. Their central role, which once consisted of providing a contested space of counter-hegemony for the subaltern classes, has become, through the process of modernisation, a role that instead acts to construct and reproduce neoliberal hegemony. They have taken on this role by a number of means: through their insertion into networks that constitute the neoliberal historical bloc, as evidenced by their current cultural, political and ideological affinities—affinities they hold with their respective contemporaries in the political elite, as opposed to with members of their social and political bases; by the adoption and promotion of neoliberal ideas, norms and practices, as demonstrated in party and policy discourse, and in the increasing technification of politics and policy-making; and finally, by the exclusion and de-legitimisation of counter-hegemonic actors, interests and practices—illustrated by an analysis of the internal political struggles within both parties, the consequent centralisation of party power into the hands of a neoliberal party elite, and a discourse that transforms

the social-democratic or revolutionary-socialist ideologies of the past into the equivalent of a 'political other' that bolsters the 'normalisation' of neoliberalism.

Far from representing a pragmatic adaptation of, or miscalculated accommodation of neoliberalism, therefore, the modernisation of the PSCh and the BLP instead consists of the active construction and internalisation of a neoliberal 'common sense', and the disarticulation of alternative common sense(s). This process has been constitutive of the transformation from the 'passive-revolutionary' path to neoliberalism of the Thatcher era in the UK, and of the Pinochet era in Chile, to the hegemonic stabilisation of neoliberalism under the BLP and the PSCh, the latter as part of the Concertación.

Our analysis of the parliamentary Left and the development of neoliberal hegemony in Chile and Britain, therefore, demonstrates general trends that can help to deepen our understanding of the relationship between the parliamentary Left and neoliberalism more generally. Such trends, at their most developed, point to the emptying-out of the 'political' from within internal party politics and policy-making—a process concretely expressed by the Left's increasing technification; by the active, ideological de-legitimisation and institutional exclusion of potential counter-hegemonic forces from internal party debates and positions in govern-ment, and the co-optation of dissenting political elites; and as a result of these processes, by the undermining of the political and ideological conditions necessary for the development from within those institutions of counter-hegemonic struggle from below. The mechanisms and strategies developed by the elites of the parliamentary Left to effect such transformations, of course, vary from place to place. Thus, as we have seen in our comparison of the BLP and PSCh, different political and ideological histories resulted in different content in terms of the de-legitimisation of past ideologies and movements. In Chile, we have witnessed the equation of socialism and social democracy with chaos and a return to dictatorship; while in Britain, social democracy has been equated with economic crisis and electoral defeat.

Conclusion

We have sought to investigate, in this paper, the modern-isation of Left parties in Chile and Britain. This investigation

has been approached from a neo-Gramscian perspective, according to which political agency is understood in terms of its inter-relationship with the social context within which that agency takes place; and in particular, it has employed the tools developed within neo-Gramscian perspectives for forming a historicised account of the concrete reproduction of capitalist social relations (through concepts such as 'historical bloc' and 'hegemony'). Thus, Left parliamentary parties are viewed as exercising hegemonic *or* counter-hegemonic roles, depending on the social context and balance of class forces within which they act. We have shown how the modernisation of both the PSCh and the BLP has witnessed the active (re)production of a neoliberal historical bloc and hegemony. Accordingly, we have investigated the alliances formed by each party in the process of its modernisation, the discourse and practises it has sought to promote, and the extent to which these practices have excluded alternative actors, interests and practices that might destabilise such a balance of class forces.

We have observed similar tendencies in both cases. We have witnessed the centralisation of power within the core leadership elites of each party, coupled with the hollowing-out of party democracy and the exclusion and de-legitimisation of advocates of alternative ideas and programmes. This has included a significant erosion of input by the parties' subaltern bases, involving the active demobilisation and de-legitimisation both of proponents of traditional social democracy or socialism and of popular social movements, coupled with the formation of new links with non-traditional party actors, including technical experts and old political enemies such as sections of the political Right and the business class. In each case, a discourse has been successfully adopted that presents the revolutionary-socialist or social-democratic ideologies of the past as a 'political other' that bolsters the 'normalisation' of neoliberalism. The modernised Left parties in Chile and Britain have also reformed state machinery in such a way that they have significantly reduced the democratic deliberation surrounding input into the decision-making process, including by an increasing reliance on technocratic and rules-based policy-making, technical experts, organisational and managerial reforms that create an increased centralisation of power within the state's core executive, and the increased use of private-sector actors, resources and managerial

techniques. Finally, the public policies enacted by the governments of both parties have ensured citizens' increased suitability for operation within the liberalised labour markets of each country, and tightened discipline over subaltern classes within those countries through the promotion of both ideological individualism and policies that focus on the individual as the source of social failure. As part of this, there has been a focus on the discipline, exclusion and control of certain 'problematic' cohorts of individuals, and infringements into the civil and political rights of extra-state actors.

We therefore concur with—and extend to include the case of the PSCh—the analysis made by Steinberg and Johnson (2004: 9) in their claim that the modernisation of the BLP since 1997 has witnessed 'the deepening and extending of neoliberal social relations and individualism, as the bringing of all spheres of social life into market and commodity relations and as the expansion of these relationships globally … and how cultural questions in the largest sense—ways of living, forms of subjectivity … might be central to this politics'. However, we contest the claim that this is a process of passive revolution. Rather, the distinctiveness of this process of consolidation involves not the external imposition of neoliberalism upon the subaltern classes, but rather the internalisation within the subaltern classes of processes of individualisation and the construction of subjectivities compatible with neoliberal capitalism—a process engend-ered, crucially, by the political elites of the subaltern classes themselves.

In terms of the substantial differences between the contexts in which each party operates, by far the largest impact has been that of their different experiences of opposition. Thus, in the case of the PSCh, the experience of exile and political and social chaos—developments that can themselves be interpreted as the result of attempts by the Allende government to implement radical democratic socialist reform—has played a major role in the adoption and legitimisation of the neoliberal consensus. In contrast, in the case of the BLP, an emphasis on the (economic) inefficiency of more 'traditional' social-democratic policies and the experience of prolonged electoral defeat have been the key moments that justify the adoption of neoliberalism. Interestingly, aside from these divergences, the processes of modernisation in both countries were characterised by remarkably similar tendencies.

In sum, we argue that the process of modernisation in both the Chilean Socialist Party and the British Labour Party has been neither a pragmatic adaptation of traditional values to a new international socioeconomic environment, nor the misguided accommodation of ascendant neoliberal values, norms and practices. Instead, we argue that Left parties' modernisation is rather an active process by which their party elites seek to operate within the contemporary neoliberal historical bloc. As part of this process, they contribute towards its successful consolidation by acting to (re)produce neoliberal hegemony. In perpetuating, deepening and enabling the reproduction of neoliberal hegemony, and (crucially) ensuring consent within the subordinated classes to this process of domination, both parties constitute barriers to, rather than opportunities for, the development of counter-hegemonic struggle.

Finally, contradictions that have arisen as a result of this process of modernisation—the lessening and ageing of membership and a fall in participation, for example; or a decline in electoral support and an increasingly antagonistic relationship with traditional supporters[9]—threaten the influence, popularity and governing capacity of the parties themselves, rather than the hegemony of neoliberalism. Nevertheless, these contradictory outcomes, and in particular the inability of both parties to appeal to younger generations, opens up the possibility that subsequent counter-hegemonic struggle from below will be free from illusions about the radical potential of modernised Left parties such as the BLP and PSCh, and will develop new forms of subaltern politics instead.

Notes

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1. In an interesting article, Stuart Hall straddles these two approaches by arguing that New Labour is a combination of neoliberalism (initiated under Thatcher) and social democracy (as the historical basis of the Labour Party). New Labour is therefore viewed as an adaptation of 'traditional' social democracy to contemporary neo-liberalism. However, in contrast to Giddens, Hall does not

welcome this combination but claims it should (and can) instead be replaced by a more substantive Left agenda (Hall, 2003).

2. We understand neo-Gramscian perspectives to be those drawing on themes and controversies within Gramsci's work that remain sufficiently relevant to stimulate investigation in the present, while also recognising the changed nature of the present from the past (Morton, 2003a). While this approach is currently most often applied within the sub-discipline of international political economy (see, for instance, Morton, 2006; Worth, 2005; and Cox, 1993), it has also been widely employed in the analysis of national state–society relations (for instance, by Hall, 1988).
3. Material drawn from discussions, on the part of Sara Motta, with Francisco Diaz and E. Tendero, Socialist Party intellectuals. Also from an interview with PSCh congressman Clovis Rossi; conversations with Gutierrez Vasquez, secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; and an interview with Y. Haddad, sub-secretary in the Ministry of Labour (all August 2002).
4. In many of the interviews conducted by Sara Motta with the Joventud Socialista (JS)—specifically with C. Muñoz and V. Acuña, members of the JS's central committee, and with members of the professionalised generation of PSCh militants such as Camila Benado and Francisco Diaz—in August 2002 and September 2003, there was a clear recognition of the opportunism and individualism inherent in the logic that motivated individuals to become involved in the politics of the Socialist Party. Many, including Diaz and other members of the JS central com-mittee who preferred to remain anonymous, were open about the extent to which their behaviour followed this logic. Others accepted it as a corollary of the contem-porary period, and were either resigned to, or personally discontented with, the situation.
5. This was stated during one of Sara Motta's first discuss-ions with members of the central committee of the JS, Santiago de Chile, on 10 August 2002. It was confirmed by those who sought to break the logic of opportunism and clientalism with the aim of recuperating the ideology and strategy of the party, such as C. Muñoz and V. Acuña. Yet they also admitted having had to use the same tech-niques in order to win elections and gain power within the JS.
6. Including the campaigns and communications director, Peter Mandelson; the head of the shadow commun-ications agency, Philip Gould; the head of the office of the leader, Charles Clarke; and the press secretary, Patricia Hewitt.
7 Including Gordon Brown, Peter Mandelson, Philip Gould and Alastair Campbell.

8. Interviews with Anita Lagos, central committee party secretary, on 22 August 2002; with the central committee of the JS during August 2002; and with Enrique Aguilar Norumbuena, member of the supreme tribunal of the PSCh, 12 September 2003.
9. There is no space in this article to engage in a discussion of the contradictions and forms of counter-hegemony that have developed as a result of these processes in the PSCh and BLP.

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