

ANTHONY  
GIDDENS

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# RUNAWAY WORLD

How Globalisation is  
Reshaping our Lives

PROFILE BOOKS

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# Contents

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## Preface to the second edition

I gave the BBC talks on which this book is based more than three years ago. The theme of the book – the transformative impact of globalisation upon our lives – has become even more widely debated now than it was then. The term ‘globalisation’ has itself become ever more globalised. There can be few quasi-technical words that have achieved such wide currency.

When I was writing the talks, in late 1998, the anti-globalisation movement had barely got going. Since that date, many thousands of demonstrators opposing globalisation have taken to the streets, in cities ranging from Seattle to Buenos Aires, Gothenburg and Genoa. Moreover, no one three years ago anticipated the events of 11 September 2001.

Each of these sets of developments demands analysis, but I should say at the outset that there is little or nothing in the text of the book which I would want to change in the light of them. Consider first what

happened on 11 September. All the sections of the book are relevant to the events of that day and their aftermath. Intensifying globalisation, documented in the opening chapter, furnishes both the context of the attacks and the means that made them possible. The terrorists' target was the United States, the prime global power. They used jet aircraft as destructive weapons. In staging the events as they did, they had in mind a global media audience. The second plane crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Centre about half an hour after the first – guaranteeing dramatic television coverage. It has been estimated that a billion people across the world saw the second plane hit the South Tower in real time.

The concern of the second chapter, risk, speaks for itself. The events of 11 September 2001 have alerted us to risks about which most people previously – including states' leaders – were quite sanguine. Whatever happens to Al-Qaeda, the destruction of the Trade Towers and the damaging of the Pentagon will almost certainly not be the only examples of major terrorist activity organised on a transnational basis. We have become newly conscious of the vulnerabilities that can be exploited by terrorist action, such as the targeting of nuclear power plants, the poisoning of water supplies, or the propagation of deadly diseases.

The titles of the other three chapters – tradition, family and democracy – might seem more remote, but they are not. Al-Qaeda is a fundamentalist movement.

There is an intimate and inseparable relation between tradition and fundamentalism, as I try to make clear. Fundamentalist ideas are by no means limited to Islam, or indeed to religion more generally. Fundamentalist groups and struggles can come into being in any sphere where traditional beliefs and practices are becoming corroded. Fundamentalism – religious, nationalist or ethnic – is always edged with the possibility of violence, since it is the antithesis of tolerance. To the fundamentalist, there is only one right and proper way of life, and everyone else had better get out of the way.

A preoccupation with the family, and particularly with the changing role of women, is in turn at the core of some of the major forms of fundamentalism, particularly those of a religious variety. Religious fundamentalists want to roll back modernity – and nowhere more obviously so than in respect of the emancipation of women. Whether in the shape of the American religious right, or Islamic movements, the fundamentalists are vociferous defenders of the traditional family, and hostile to the attempts of women to break away from their traditional social and cultural roles. And of course they are also commonly antagonistic to democracy, the very principles of which depend upon universal rights.

Nations today, I say in the original text, mostly no longer have enemies, but instead face risks and dangers. Have the events of 11 September 2001 rendered this statement inappropriate or false? I don't think so.

Intensifying globalisation has radically altered the nature of nation-states, and their modes of relating to each other, especially the industrial nations. A large number of nations have given up the impulse to invade or conquer one another. Belligerent states still exist in various parts of the world, such as Iraq under Saddam Hussein. But the most important sources of danger, for industrial and developing countries alike, lie in failed or collapsing states, together with the fears and hatreds such situations engender. Afghanistan is an obvious example. Countries struggling against poverty, bearing the long-term impact of colonialism and the Cold War, or both, and where government lacks legitimacy, are breeding grounds for resentment and despair. They can become havens for transnational networks, which, as the rise of Al-Qaeda showed, can provide a very real source of threat to the integrity of nations.

The events of 11 September 2001 prompted a flurry of speculative writing. Did they form a watershed in current world history? Is it true, as was so commonly said at the time, that 'the world will never be the same again'? The easiest way to consider these questions is to consider the world on 10 September 2001. How different would the world situation look today if the terrorist attacks in the United States had either failed or not taken place?

It is clear that 11 September was less of a fault-line in history than many commentators, reeling from the

unexpected and impossible nature of what happened, asserted at the time. The opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a far more signal event for contemporary history than the attacks on New York and Washington – indeed, in some respects it was the backdrop to them. The militant Islamic groups that created Al-Qaeda, after all, originally were actively supported by the Americans during the latter phases of the Cold War, as a means of ejecting the Soviets from Afghanistan. With the ending of the Cold War, neither the West nor Russia took much further interest in what happened in Afghanistan, leaving the country to stew in the mess they had helped to create. Much the same happened in other parts of the globe, including other regions in Asia, Africa and Central and Southern Africa. Many of the failing states of the world are located in areas where the two super-powers during the Cold War period fought their battles by proxy.

The events of 11 September 2001 may have changed the world less than many have claimed, but the initial responses to them were not all over-exaggerated. Prior to that day no heartlands area in a Western state had been attacked by a non-Western force for over three centuries. The only other example, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, occurred in a relatively isolated outpost. Terrorist groups of various kinds have steadily been building up transnational networks – the IRA, for example, has connections with a range of other insurgent organisations,

and has received support from within the United States, and from Libya, Cuba and Iran, among other countries. But most terrorist acts previously have killed and injured quite small numbers of people. Less than 1,500 people died, for instance, over thirty years of the troubles in North Ireland as a result of terrorist violence. The attacks of 11 September not only killed some 4,000, they were aimed at the nerve centres of American power – probably including the White House as well as the buildings that were actually hit. The cost of them to the US economy has been put at \$640 billion.

The campaign of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan may have severely damaged Al-Qaeda, but much of the organisation's network remains intact. Whether or not Al-Qaeda itself carries out further attacks, the mode in which it was set up may well serve as a model for others in the future. It has or had a membership structure operative in the United States, several of the major countries of Europe and the Middle East as well as Asia. The sophistication, planning and coordination involved in the 11 September attacks were of a level normally associated with a state rather than a dissident group. Before the current global era it is impossible to imagine that comparable events could have occurred, reflecting as they do our new-found interdependence. The rise of global terrorism, like world-wide networks involved in money-laundering, drug-running and other forms of organised crime, are all parts of the dark side of globalisation.

The events of 11 September 2001 therefore do mark a significant development in patterns of confrontation and violence in the current world order, the full consequences of which we can only guess at. There have also already been geopolitical shifts of some significance. The United States and Russia, for instance, have drawn closer together in the face of what their leaderships see as shared threats. The Russians have softened their opposition to the plans of the United States to construct a system of missile defence.

It would seem obvious that world-wide terrorist networks can only be combated through world-wide collaboration, both among nations, and between nations and other agencies. The sharing of information, cooperation in the gathering of intelligence, and mutual planning to reduce strategic vulnerabilities, would seem the ways forward. So far, however, little of this has been forthcoming. The Bush administration in the United States came into power determined to follow a more unilateralist line than the outgoing president, Bill Clinton, had pursued. President Bush refused to sign up to the Kyoto accord on climate change, rejected the attempts of OECD to regulate tax havens and has disavowed the treaty designed to counter chemical warfare. Some of these earlier positions were modified after 11 September, but the thrust of America's position has remained the same. The Bush administration does not accept the need for an International Court of Criminal

Law, and seeks to weaken the strength of international law rather than bolster it. The budget of the military has been upped considerably, in spite of the fact that the United States is already stronger militarily than all the other industrial nations put together. The object of the American military planners is quite clear and explicit: the United States is to be capable of winning any armed conflict in which it might become engaged, anywhere on earth, as well as in outer space.

President Bush has described 11 September 2001 and its aftermath as 'a new kind of war'. But his response thus far is more attuned to traditional forms of warfare and national security than to the challenge of the global age. Security can no longer be wholly or even primarily national, even for the most powerful state in the world. Military preparedness is essential, but even the most sophisticated weaponry can be outflanked, or can simply be irrelevant to combating organisations whose aims and methods have nothing to do with conquering territory. 'Global guerrillas' will be just as difficult to defeat militarily as guerrillas have proved to be on more local terrain. Guerrilla wars almost always have only been brought to an end through political means – through compromise, negotiation and dealing with the problems that sparked off insurgency in the first place. The same applies on a global level.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were by no means condemned across the world.

Many with grievances against the United States, and against the West as a whole, saw them as a justified strike against an oppressor. Anti-Americanism is a common sentiment, not only in Arab and Islamic nations or communities, but in a diversity of other nations besides. Some forms of hatred towards the United States and the West are based upon a mixture of regional and religious antagonisms, especially in the Middle East. Hostility towards Israel, and to the United States as its main patron, has become the driving force of political life and culture in most Arab states, and has fuelled the rise of brutal regimes in Iraq and Syria. In the era of instantaneous communications, it has become a key component of Islamic fundamentalism world-wide. No 'war against terrorism' will get very far unless there is a concerted effort made – and one that would involve the UN and the wider world community – to achieve a resolution of the Israel-Palestine issue.

Anti-Americanism and anti-Western feeling are also widespread in societies that are not Islamic, and where the conflicts of the Middle East are not an issue – in particular in the poorer parts of the world. Western policy is seen as the source of poverty and under-development. These beliefs often have a foundation in fact. The parlous condition of some African countries, for example, reflects the long-term impact of Western colonialism and the more recent involvements of Western powers during the Cold War period. But they have often today



become generalised to globalisation itself. Globalisation is widely seen in the developing world as merely the latest stage in the exploitation of the third world by the West – a project from which the rich countries gain at the expense of the poor.

Nor are such beliefs confined to those living in poor countries. They are shared by many in the anti-globalisation movement, whose activities have grown apace since the World Trade Organisation meetings in Seattle on 30 November 1999. Since then, mass protests organised by the anti-globalisers have taken place in many cities. For a few months after 11 September 2001, the anti-globalisation movement seemed to become disorientated and fragmented. During the early phases of the American action in Afghanistan, some groups involved with the movement broke away to protest against the US incursion, believing it to be both unjustified and likely to produce a humanitarian disaster in the country. However, the movement has now regrouped and has again begun to stage mass street demonstrations.

What do the demonstrators want? What does it mean to be 'anti-globalisation'? A diversity of different groups have in fact been involved in the demonstrations, having varying aims and ambitions. Some, a small minority, have connections to anarchism. Others declare themselves to be not just against globalisation but 'anti-capitalism'. A few are prepared to use violence to further

their ends. The vast majority, however, are concerned with peaceful protest.

Three themes repeatedly surface, even among those whose views might differ in other ways. One, as I mention in Chapter I, harks back to anti-Americanism and jaundiced views about the West. Globalisation, it is held, essentially advances the interests of the United States and the other Western countries. It is more or less identical to Americanisation – hence the favourite targets of some of the demonstrators, McDonald's, Starbucks, or shops selling Nike goods.

The second concerns the role of the big corporations, of whom these names are representative. The largest companies in the world, those in the anti-globalisation movement point out, have an annual turnover higher than the GDP of all but a few nations. They have usurped some of the power that should belong to sovereign democratic states. They are able to roam the world looking for the cheapest sources of raw materials and labour, and are able to ride roughshod over the interests of poorer countries in so doing.

However, the really important issue to many in the anti-globalisation movement is world inequality. The inequalities between rich and poor, they believe, are growing, and globalisation is the prime force responsible. Here we come back to 11 September 2001, since the widening gulf between the affluent few and the impoverished majority, it is said, creates the feelings of

resentment and despair that helped prompt the attacks.

Is globalisation geared to the concerns of America and the other rich nations? There is plainly a good deal of truth in the assertion. The United States is easily the dominant power in the world, militarily, economically and culturally. Most of the world's biggest companies are American, and all the top fifty corporations have their home base in one or other of the industrial countries. The vast majority of internet users are in the rich societies. The wealthier countries dominate some of the most influential world agencies, such as G8, the World Bank and the IMF – and also, many would say, the UN. World society is radically imbalanced in respect of who holds the levers of power and who does not.

Yet globalisation today is not a simple recapitulation of the past, and it is not identical either with Americanisation or Westernisation. The dominance of the United States, and the West more generally, over the rest of the world could be said to operate on three levels – the economic, the geopolitical and the cultural. The United States is easily the largest economy in the world and, whether one likes it or not, is the main motor of the global economy as a whole. The prosperity or otherwise of the American economy at any one point in time affects the progress of virtually every other economy in the world. But neither the United States, nor the industrial countries as a whole, control the global economy,

which is far too complex and encompassing for any nation or groups of nations to bend to their own will.

Geopolitically, the United States is now the world's only super-power, but its overall influence is probably less than it was during the Cold War period. During that time, America was able to intervene in large parts of the world, building up a gigantic series of coalitions directed towards containing the spread of communism. Today, its global influence is more diffuse. In spite of President Bush's apparent turn towards unilateralism, there is little the United States can do in most contexts without the collaboration of other nations. Geopolitically, the world is becoming more polycentric. The EU has nothing like the military muscle of the United States, but nevertheless is becoming more and more of an independent player in world affairs. Russia retains its potential as a major power. Japan, South Korea and China continue to develop their geopolitical clout, and India is certain to assume a more powerful influence in world affairs than it has had hitherto. These changes are already affecting the composition of world bodies, where there is much more direct involvement of non-Western countries than there used to be – a trend that needs to be promoted further.

American involvement is of course of crucial importance in the reform of global institutions and agreements. But if such involvement is not forthcoming, the rest of the world can often push on anyway. The Kyoto

agreements have been endorsed by 53 nations, in spite of the refusal of the United States to sign up. As of April 2002, 66 countries had ratified the treaty to establish the International Criminal Court. America has opposed the idea of the court since 139 other nations first approved it in 1998, at a meeting in Rome under the auspices of the UN. The United States maintains its hostility to the proposals, but the court will come into existence, and will provide the means of putting on trial political leaders accused of crimes of genocide or mass murder.

Western, and more specifically American, cultural influence is visible everywhere – in films, television, popular music and other areas. Cultural standardisation is an intrinsic part of this process. Yet all this is a relatively superficial cultural veneer; a more profound effect of globalisation is to produce greater local cultural diversity, not homogeneity. The United States itself is the very opposite of a cultural monolith, comprising as it does a dazzling variety of different ethnic and cultural groups. Because of its 'push down' effect, discussed in the text, globalisation tends to promote a renewal of local cultural identities. Sometimes these reflect wider world patterns, but very often they self-consciously diverge from them.

We need a similarly nuanced view of the role of the big corporations. Those who are critical of the expansion of corporate power have important points to make. Corporations can threaten the democratic legitimacy of

states, in the industrial as well as the developing countries, where they are able to buy votes or dominate the funding of political parties. Some corporations act irresponsibly in their dealings across the world. For instance, they may manipulate their operations so as to minimise the tax they pay in their parent country, or avoid paying taxes altogether. They may be indifferent to the social and environmental consequences that their policies or products have.

Yet the power of the big companies can easily be exaggerated – and is greatly exaggerated by those who say that corporations 'run the world'. Nations, especially where they act collaboratively, have far more power than corporations, and will continue to do so for the indefinite future. Nations have control of territory, corporations do not; nations establish frameworks of law, corporations do not; nations control military power, corporations do not. As globalisation advances, it actually becomes more difficult for the big companies to act irresponsibly, rather than the other way round. A major reason is the rise of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) – which have the capability to monitor what companies do, in any part of the world, and to bring sanctions to bear upon them. Organisations like Greenpeace or Oxfam are themselves global in scope. They can have a very significant impact upon what corporations do by bringing corporate malpractices to public attention, and mobilising opposition to them. In some

respects the larger a corporation is, the more vulnerable it can be. A big corporation is normally heavily dependent upon its brand name for the sale of its products around the world. Where a company miscalculates the strength of public opinion on a given issue, its brand image, and therefore its economic success, can be damaged – as happened, for instance, to Monsanto, a company that sought to promote genetically modified foods into Europe. The reactions of environmental and consumer groups forced the company to abandon its plans and substantially undermined its economic position.

Those in the anti-globalisation movement are surely right to emphasise that the divisions between rich and poor in the world today are unacceptable. The movement has played an important role in forcing this issue on to the agenda of the international community, and making sure that the leaders of the affluent nations listen. But there are two key questions that must be raised. Is it true, as most in the anti-globalisation movement claim, that global economic inequalities are increasing? And if so, is this increase the result of globalisation?

There is intense academic discussion of whether economic inequality is on the increase. The data from many countries are less than wholly reliable, and trends cannot always be inferred with much certainty. Comparisons are often made between countries on a misleading basis. For instance, comparisons are sometimes made between the

GDP of different states without factoring in differences in prices and the cost of living – a more accurate measure.

We cannot really be sure whether world economic inequalities have grown or declined. Some scholars hold that they are on the increase. Many others, including myself, argue the opposite. Economic inequalities between nations and regions, they say, almost certainly increased from about 1860 to 1960, a period during which the Western countries and Japan, under the impact of industrialisation, made a great deal of economic progress, while most other parts of the world did not. But since then, inequality has either stabilised or become reduced.

However, gross generalisations of this sort do not make much sense anyway. There are major differences between different regions of the world when we look at economic trends. Over the past forty years, some less developed countries, especially in Asia, have undergone significant processes of industrialisation. Because they have had much higher growth rates than most Western countries during that period, by definition the overall inequalities between them and the West have declined. Other areas have fared less well. Latin America as a whole, for instance, has made little advance relative to the more industrialised countries. Africa is the continent that has suffered most. In some African countries, living standards have fallen not just in relative terms but in absolute ones too.

When the anti-globalisers blame inequality on globalisation they normally have in mind a much narrower interpretation of globalisation than I argue for in this book – they identify it with the growth of market competition and free trade. Yet even using such a restricted notion, the evidence suggests that these factors favour economic growth and on balance tend to cause inequalities to lessen, not intensify. African countries have experienced problems not because of the effects of globalisation, but on the contrary because they have been left out. The most comprehensive research we have on poor countries shows that, over the past 20 years, those that have opened their economies up to external markets have had average growth rates of 5 per cent. Poor economies that remained closed have had average growth rates of zero per cent.

Inequalities have increased within some of the nations with higher growth rates, but most often because in those countries there was 'equality in poverty' before the occurrence of economic growth. Thus in China inequality has risen. But this increase has happened because initially China was both extremely equal and extremely poor. Over the past three or four decades, hundreds of millions of people in China have escaped from poverty – the most large-scale improvement in living standards ever seen. The numbers of rural poor in China went down from 250 million in 1978 to 34 million in 1999. Not all countries that have achieved

significant rises in their level of prosperity have experienced increasing internal inequality. Vietnam, for instance, has had a high rate of economic growth without any deterioration of equality. The level of absolute poverty in Vietnam was reduced by 50 per cent between 1990 and 2000; 98 per cent of the very poorest households became better off in the 1990s.

In making these points I do not want to say that the worries of the anti-globalisers are without foundation. On the contrary, they are real and justified. A retreat from globalisation, however, even if it were possible, would not resolve them. We need to advance globalisation further rather than retard it, but globalisation has to be managed more effectively and equitably than has happened over the past few decades, and the ideological agenda of economic development shifted. As I stress in the text, in most poor countries that have achieved economic success have done much more than just liberalise their trade policy. The idea that economic development can come about purely through the stimulus of market competition is false and even dangerous. A country which opens up its economy to free trade without other social and economic reforms is likely to experience economic deterioration rather than growth. The guiding hand of the state is needed, as are institutional reforms promoting education and the emancipation of women, banking reforms and the fostering of a stable investment climate. These goals are by no means beyond the reach

of even very poor countries, as the major advances made in nations such as Botswana and Mozambique show.

Many countries on the margins of the world economy will require help from the rich societies, not only money for investment and technological assistance, but other kinds of knowledge and expertise that can guide institutional reform. The United Nations has declared its aim to halve world poverty by the year 2015. It will take some doing, but given goodwill on the part of the richer societies in the world community, and positive changes in the poorer ones, the ambition can be met.

Anthony Giddens

May 2002

## Preface to the first edition

This book started life as the BBC Reith Lectures for the year 1999, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and the World Service. There is a certain distinction in being the last Reith lecturer of the twentieth century. Given the timing, it seemed to me appropriate to tackle an ambitious set of themes about the state of the world at century's end. I hoped that the lectures would stir up controversy, and such proved to be the case. They were attacked in a gratifying way in newspapers and magazines across the world. Fortunately, they attracted plenty of defenders too.

I called the lectures, and this book, *Runaway World*, because the phrase captures feelings many of us have, living at a time of rapid change. But I am not the first person to have used the term 'runaway world'. I am not even the first Reith lecturer to have employed it. It was the title of the Reith Lectures given by the celebrated anthropologist, Edmund Leach, some quarter of a century ago. However, he put a question mark after his title. I don't think one is needed any more.

Leach recorded his lectures in a studio somewhere in the depths of Broadcasting House, London, as did every contributor until recently. The 1998 lecturer, the historian of war John Keegan, departed from convention by speaking in front of an invited audience. Each lecture was succeeded by a question and answer session. My lectures also followed this format, but they marked a further new departure, because they were the first to be given internationally. The opening lecture and the final one – on globalisation and democracy – were given in London. Those on risk, tradition and the family were recorded in Hong Kong, Delhi and Washington DC respectively. Each lecture provoked a vigorous response from the audiences and I should like to thank all those who took part.

I also want to thank contributors to the Internet debate that was built around the lectures. What we tried to do was to initiate an electronic global conversation about globalisation. Large numbers of people from all corners of the world sent in their comments and criticisms. I hope that they'll forgive me for not being able to respond individually to the points they made and the queries they raised.

Others were involved in a much more continuous way in developing the lectures, and I owe a great debt to them for whatever success the lectures achieved. I should like to mention particularly: James Boyle, Controller of Radio 4; Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman

of the BBC; Gwyneth Williams, producer; Charles Sigler, Smita Patel, Gary Wisby, Mark Byford, Mark Smith, Marion Greenwood, Jenny Abramsky, Sue Lynas, Mark Damazer, Sheila Cook and the rest of the BBC production team; the BBC presenters, who did such an able job – Melvyn Bragg, Matt Frei, Mark Tully and Bridget Kendall; Anna Ford, who helped in many ways; from the London School of Economics – Anne de Sayrah, Denise Annett, Miriam Clarke, who did a sterling job typing and retyping the manuscript, Amanda Goodall, Alison Cheevers, Chris Fuller, Fiona Hodgson, Boris Holzer and Reggie Simpson. I am especially grateful to Alena Ledeneva for her advice and support. David Held read several different versions of the manuscript and made many incisive comments.

Anthony Giddens

*June 1999*

# Introduction

'The world is in a rush, and is getting close to its end' – thus spoke one Archbishop Wulfstan, in a sermon given in York, in the year 1014. It is easy to imagine the same sentiments being expressed today. Are the hopes and anxieties of each period merely a carbon copy of previous eras? Is the world in which we live, at the close of the twentieth century, really any different from that of earlier times?

It is. There are good, objective reasons to believe that we are living through a major period of historical transition. Moreover, the changes affecting us aren't confined to any one area of the globe, but stretch almost everywhere.

Our epoch developed under the impact of science, technology and rational thought, having their origins in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Western industrial culture was shaped by the Enlightenment – by the writings of thinkers who opposed the influence of religion and dogma, and who wished to replace them with a more reasoned approach to practical life.



The Enlightenment philosophers operated with a simple but apparently very powerful precept. The more we are able rationally to understand the world, and ourselves, they thought, the more we can shape history for our own purposes. We have to free ourselves from the habits and prejudices of the past in order to control the future.

Karl Marx, whose ideas owed a great deal to Enlightenment thought, put the notion very simply. We have to understand history, he argued, in order to make history. Marx and Marxism had a massive influence in the twentieth century under the guidance of this notion.

According to this view, with the further development of science and technology, the world should become more stable and ordered. Even many thinkers who opposed Marx accepted such an idea. The novelist, George Orwell, for example, anticipated a society with too much stability and predictability – in which we would all become tiny cogs in a vast social and economic machine. So did many social thinkers, such as the famous German sociologist, Max Weber.

The world in which we find ourselves today, however, doesn't look or feel much like they predicted it would. Rather than being more and more under our control, it seems out of our control – a runaway world. Moreover, some of the influences that were supposed to make life more certain and predictable for us, including the progress of science and technology, often have quite

the opposite effect. Global climate change and its accompanying risks, for example, probably result from our intervention into the environment. They aren't natural phenomena. Science and technology are inevitably involved in our attempts to counter such risks, but they have also contributed to creating them in the first place.

We face risk situations that no one in previous history has had to confront – of which global warming is only one. Many of the new risks and uncertainties affect us no matter where we live, and regardless of how privileged or deprived we are. They are bound up with globalisation, that package of changes which is the subject of this book as a whole. Science and technology have themselves become globalised. It has been calculated that there are more scientists working in the world today than have been involved in the whole history of science previously. But globalisation has a diversity of other dimensions too. It brings into play other forms of risk and uncertainty, especially those involved in the global electronic economy – itself a very recent development. As in the case of science, risk here is double-edged. Risk is closely connected to innovation. It isn't always to be minimised; the active embrace of financial and entrepreneurial risk is the very driving force of the globalising economy.

What globalisation is, and whether it is in any way new, are the focus of intense debate. I discuss this debate