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Abstract:

Are multinational corporations predatory moguls able to evade civic responsibilities borne by local businesses or are they vital links to the benefits of the global economic system? Using the IsssA database, I investigate public perceptions of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the 1980s and 1990s, finding that Australians have rather reserved attitudes towards multinationals and want stronger government scrutiny over their activities. While Australians have always supported strong government regulation, the desire to control MNCs has grown significantly between the mid 1980s and the end of 1999, net of other factors shaping attitudes to international business. Concerns about MNCs are shared by educated professionals and less educated tradesmen alike. But people with supervisory responsibilities hold more favourable views of the role multinationals play in the Australian economy, while public servants' perceptions are rather pessimistic. The political left is especially distrustful towards multinationals, but the prevailing mood on the Right is also apprehensive, so the Left does not differ dramatically from the Right. Cosmopolitan attitudes encourage positive perceptions of trans-nationals. Yet they are only one figure among many that shape public opinion about multinational businesses. Preference for protectionism of local businesses is strong in Australia, and profoundly affects feelings about offshore corporations.

Public perceptions of multinational corporations in Australia

Foresightedly in the 1970s John Galbraith's *The Age of Uncertainty* asserted that modern corporations affect our lives more profoundly than 'unions, universities, politicians' and 'the government' (Galbraith 1977: 257). Indeed, some observers see multinational corporations as the most important and powerful actors in the ever-more-globalising capitalist world (Kim 2000: 177). The power of large international businesses is beyond the control of any national government, which raises the possibility that a few giant trans-national corporations sculpt also the economic and cultural contours of the Australian society (Braithwaite and Drahos 2000; David, Wheelwright, and Left Book Club Co-operative 1989).

Moreover, it could be that the globalisation trend is so powerful that it has flattened potential opposition. For example, the 'globalising-institutions' hypothesis, argues that both the internationalisation of culture and the logic of modern institutions tend strongly towards the evolution of trans-national linkages, with authority legitimated by expertise rather than democracy (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997). The 'economic globalisation' hypothesis holds that increasing economic complexity and international integration of markets make it very difficult to oppose international economic entities (Cerny 1995). The 'irrelevant state' hypothesis holds that the expanded scope of the market, both within and between countries, means that the state has less to offer as a shield against powerful corporate actors, so people are no longer inclined to turn to it for protection (Schwartzman 1998).

Do attitudes to multinational corporations matter?

Accounting for public perceptions of multinational corporations (MNCs) is an important element of the balance of power between national governments and international capitalist enterprises. If the public perceives multinationals unfavourably and fears that their penetration of the Australian economy will unavoidably lead to erosion of local industries and employment opportunities it is interesting to see whether

these perceptions have and will influence government policy towards international business or whether this policy will be developed without regard to the attitudes of the electorate.

Theoretical framework

Although little is known about the public's view on the matter, an abundant literature analyses the economic advantages and disadvantages of the presence of MNCs in Australia. Since the 1970s and the 1980 two models of thought guided the discussion of the impact of the multinational corporations (Paul and Barbato 1985).

One stresses the positive impacts of multinational corporations who provide investment, employment for the local workforce, and training in new technologies and better work organisation. Many economists argue that, while not every aspect of business conducted by MNCs in Australia is advantageous, on balance MNCs benefit the Australian economy and labour market rather than harm it (Thorburn, Langdale, and Houghton 2002).

The other model points out to a number of perils involved in the activities of multinational corporations and is best articulated in the world-system theories and the related perspectives (Kerbo 2000; Wallerstein 1979). Rather than fostering economic development the MNCs are accused of hindering the local business infrastructure and exploiting vulnerable local populations (Kim 2000). Anti-globalisation advocates and exponents of left nationalism focus on harm done by MNCs, seeing that as outweighing the advantages, if any (David, Wheelwright, and Left Book Club Co-operative 1989). The adverse effects of international business operations are best documented for developing countries (Kim 2000) and hence some might think it inappropriate to fear the same adverse effects in Australia.

Yet, according to Wallerstein's influential world-system theory of international stratification, although Australia is not especially badly off in the international pecking order, being, at worst, a semi-periphery (Wallerstein 1979: 100), nonetheless the Australian working class, like their peers abroad, is

subject to the same ruthless exploitation by the transnational business elites.

Using the criteria of the exponents of the world-system theory Australia, with its high level of economic development, military power executed locally in the Asia-Pacific region, financial establishments across the world and home to at least two of one hundred world's largest trans-national businesses¹ should be viewed as one of the core nations (UCTAD 2002: 89 & 100), who dictates the directions of the global business rather than being a passive pawn in the process. Yet, this is only the business elites and relatively small segments of the society attached to them who profit from the globalised business. The Australian economy is heavily dependent on the business operations of companies with headquarters outside the country (UCTAD 2002). Some argue that Australia depends most heavily on MNCs for research and development (Thorburn, Langdale, and Houghton 2002: 13). This makes Australian workers and consumers vulnerable to the decisions made outside the country and some commentators, representing left nationalism, fear that Australia is subject to excessive capital outflow which in the long run undermines the local economy and leads to adverse effects for working Australians.

MNCs are often supported by local governments with various tax cuts and subsidy schemes. In more recent years, governments have been negotiating with MNCs to benefit from their positive impacts and to protect their labour market and business sector from the negative consequences of the MNC operations. Most policy makers and business operators accept that globalisation of the production chains is unavoidable. Some call for economic autarky, but such calls are mostly dismissed by policymakers. Nevertheless the question of whether multinational corporations do more harm than good, remains to a large degree poised between two vast bodies of mutually contradictory research inspired by economic development theories in the tradition of Walt Rostow on the one hand, and, on the other hand, world-system theories inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein.

Therefore it is interesting to investigate whether or not ordinary Australians espouse view that the presence of multinationals in Australia is on balance positive. It is possible that the concerns about the future of the local economy and jobs coupled with concerns raised by the media reports of unscrupulous and unethical activities of profit-driven MNCs evoke increasingly chilly reactions from the public, despite the allegedly better employment prospects for the educated professionals which globalisation of markets is meant to be tied to.

This paper contributes an analysis of public perceptions and attitudes to multinational corporations and the perceived need for government regulation as applied to their activity. Using data from the Issa (International Social Science Survey/Australia) collected between 1984 and 1999 from representative national samples of adult Australians, I (1) depict trends in attitudes to multinational corporations in 1980s and 1990s in Australia, (2) analyse the effects of social class and labour-market characteristics on these attitudes (3) analyse the influence of left-wing ideology on the perceived benefits MNCs generate for the Australian society (4) disentangle the effects of anti-capitalist left ideology from the effects of resentment towards foreigners; (5) show the extent to which support for protectionism ties with perceptions of MNCs relative to other factors.

While the design of items measuring attitudes to multinational corporations allows only for gauging them at a relatively general level, the data is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive available on the topic.

Hypotheses

(1) Changes in attitudes over time

Research on attitudes to multinational corporations in Australia found them in early 1990s to be 'guardedly optimistic' (Evans 1995), with people perceiving benefits but also supporting strict government regulation of international businesses. After several more years of economic restructuring some analysts argue that Australians blame international big business for the deterioration of their work and pay conditions (Pusey, Wilson, Turnbull, and Fattore 2003). Therefore it is likely that the later 1990s saw a significant cooling in attitudes towards trans-national corporations, a trend which, if the arguments about detrimental effects of globalisation are correct, will continue into the future.

(2) Hypothesised effects of ideology of the Left

Marxism-inspired ideology of the working class is traditionally suspicious of large capitalist enterprises, as they are perceived as thriving on exploitation of workers and local resources. Large international corporations are feared as unscrupulous, predatory moguls aiming to maximise profits and able to avoid many of the civic responsibilities born by the local businesses. As multinationals are capable of swift relocations of their business activity they have little commitment to their labour if cheaper, that is more

exploitable, labour can be found elsewhere (David, Wheelwright, and Left Book Club Co-operative 1989: Chapter 18). So in many ways they could be perceived to be in a perfect position to maximise profits, exploiting the local labour force, environment and national legal system, which grants them many concessions and often is unable to tax them effectively (Braithwaite and Drahos 2000). Therefore trade unions, supporters of government intervention in the economy, and the Labor electorate are all expected to have chilly feelings towards multinationals and to desire more monitoring of international business activities in Australia.

(3) Hypothesised effects of nationalism

Nationalism and fear that Australia's economic sustainability and political sovereignty may be deteriorating as more foreign investment flows into the country are also likely determinants of attitudes to multinationals. First, authors such as Ted Wheelwright and Frank Stillwell² argue that Australia is, like many nations, a passive client of international capitalism, unable to execute any control over the direction and outcomes of the operation of giant TNCs in mining, vehicle manufacturing, media and other industries. This penetration by foreign investment is seen as a sure path leading to the destruction of Australia's domestic industries and economic potential, which is equivalent to destroying employment opportunities for future generations. The theme that dominates this line of argument is the necessity for greater economic independence if not economic autarky. This implies that resistance to foreign investment and business activity may correspond to feelings of reluctance towards foreigners in general. Such inclinations are consistent with patriotism and pride in national identity, and there is evidence that, throughout the developed world, globalisation has not eroded national identity (Deflem and Pampel 1996; Evans and Kelley 2002). Therefore people who may have no negative feelings towards local big business but have relatively reserved attitudes to foreigners may be hostile towards foreign business operations.

(4) Hypothesised effects of social class

The logic of the world-system theory (the exponents of which identify Australia as a semi-periphery in the global power system) should lead some Australians to fear more detrimental effects of multinational business than to appreciate the positive ones such as generating jobs or bringing in new technologies. In contrast some Australians, successful businessmen

who perceive of Australia as more the exporter of ideas and business initiative than a passive receiver of such, could be quite enthusiastic about companies who bring foreign investment into the country. Hence I expect an impact of labour force characteristics on attitudes to multinationals. The self-employed, professionals and people with more education could be more inclined to approve of multinational corporations and allow them more freedom in their activities within Australia.

Measurement

The IsssA measured public perceptions and feelings towards multinational corporations using several questions (the wording is given together with the answers in text below). These questions are designed to gauge positive and negative perceptions about multinational corporations, the perceived benefit of their presence in Australia and the perceived need to subject them to more stringent government regulation. Their correlations with each other and with criterion variables are given in Table 1 in the Technical Notes. The measurement of socio-demographic and labour market characteristics follows AES standards (Evans and Kelley 2004).

Description

Australians have, on balance, rather reserved attitudes towards multinational companies, as shown by their responses on the IsssA feeling thermometer:

1. You probably feel favourable about some people or groups and unfavourable about others. Please show your feelings with this 'feeling thermometer' — use any number from 0 to 100 for a rating. 100 is the highest, for people you feel very warm or favourable about, and 0 is the lowest, for people you feel very strongly against. If you are neutral, neither for nor against, give a rating of 50.

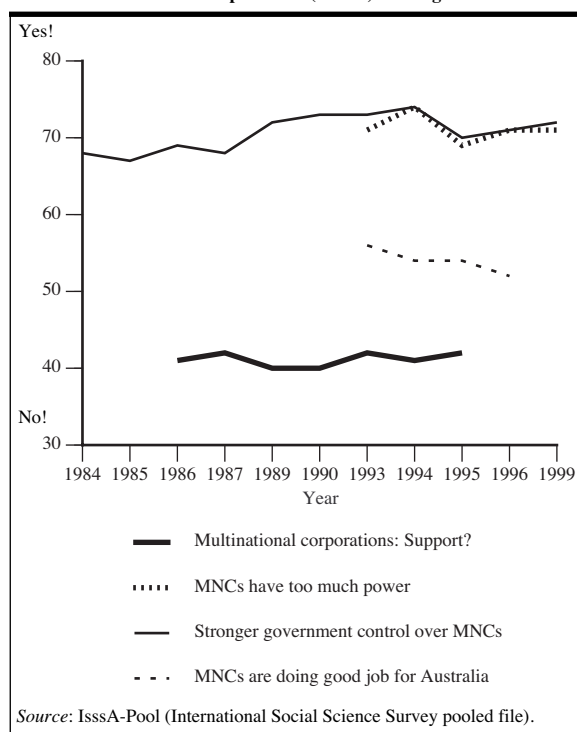
How do you feel about multinational corporations?

[Mean = 40]

The average view on the feeling thermometer scale from low 0 denoting unfavourable feelings to high 100 corresponding to very favourable feelings multinational corporations is 40 points. That is 10 points chillier than the neutral point of 50, although not quite in the definitely negative range.

These perceptions did not change between 1986 and 1999 (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Positive feelings towards and the perceived need for greater government control of multinational corporations (MNCs). Averages



Public evaluations of multinational business' activity are lukewarm rather than enthusiastic. The average view is that MNCs neither benefit nor harm the Australian economy. The IsssA asked people:

Do you agree or disagree that ...

In general, multi-national companies do a good job for Australia?

Strongly agree	2	[100 points]
Agree	35	[75 points]
Neither agree nor disagree	43	[50 points]
Disagree	17	[25 points]
Strongly disagree	3	[0 points]

100% (N = 8,088)
(Mean = 54)

In 1994, the average evaluation of whether the multinational corporations were doing a good job for Australia was about 56 points out of a possible 100. By 1999, this average crept down to 52 points (Figure 1). This difference is a very small but statistically significant shift towards the view that MNCs in Australia do more harm than good, although on balance the perceptions are still neutral rather than negative.

Moreover, Australians have serious reservations about the power wielded by multinationals. The IsssA question was:

Do you agree or disagree that ...

3. Multi-national corporations have too much power in Australia

Strongly agree	25	[100 points]
Agree	44	[75 points]
Neither agree nor disagree	22	[50 points]
Disagree	9	[25 points]
Strongly disagree	0	[0 points]

100% (N = 10,078)
(Mean = 71)

The modal opinion is mild agreement (75), and the mean is very close to that, 71.

These reserved attitudes towards multinational corporations are accompanied by policy preferences that the activities of multinational corporations within Australia should be subject to strict government control. The IsssA asked people whether they agreed that:

4. There should be stronger government control over the activities of multi-national companies

Strongly agree	27	[100 points]
Agree	42	[75 points]
Neither agree nor disagree	18	[50 points]
Disagree	11	[25 points]
Strongly disagree	2	[0 points]

100% (N = 24,289)
(Mean = 70)

The averaged perceived desire for such a control is at about 70 points on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 denotes the view that no government scrutiny is needed, and 100 is equivalent to thinking that the Australian government should regulate the activities of MNCs more effectively.

This desire for more regulation of MNC activities within Australia has continued strong since the mid-eighties, with a moderate increase in the last decade. Nor have the much vaunted successes of multinationals eroded public desire that they be ridden on a tight rein. The desire for more control of MNCs correlates very strongly with the view that MNCs have too much power in Australia (the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for the pooled data is 0.67). In fact these two views are reflections of the same attitude and thus they have been averaged in the multivariate analyses into one dependent variable gauging the desire to regulate MNC activities (see Technical Notes Table 2).

Multivariate analysis

Over time, public attitudes towards multinational corporations have been slowly, but significantly, chilling, net of changes in the socioeconomic composition of the Australian citizenry, as shown by the estimates of my ordinary least squares regression model (Technical Notes Table 2). With deregulation and economic 'opening-up', multinationals have been increasingly evident in many spheres of Australian life, but familiarity has not made the heart grow fonder. Instead, it seems that increasing experience of a globalising world turns Australians slowly but steadily against multinational corporations.

Older citizens are more sceptical about MNCs than are younger people. This is a particularly interesting finding because it runs in the opposite direction to the time trend. Thus, something about the experience of life and the aging process turns people against multinationals, and moreover, time trends shift everyone throughout the entire age span again.

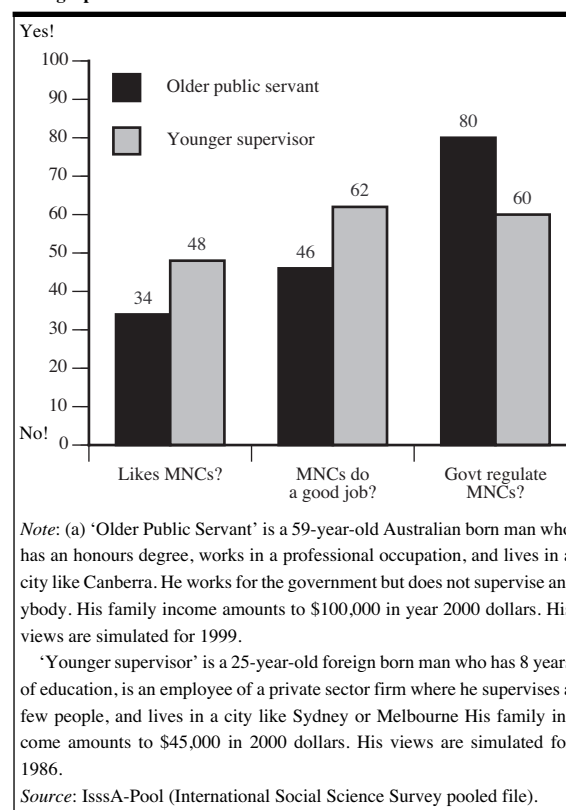
Education and occupation, the core determinants of social opportunities and rewards in Australian life, do not significantly differentiate Australians' views on multinationals.³

But other labour-market related characteristics do matter. Supervisors have significantly warmer feelings about international business. In contrast, employees of the government sector have cool attitudes to international business. People with higher family incomes tend to evaluate MNCs with a little more optimism, net of other effects.

Labour market characteristics and attitudes to multinationals

The better to understand the joint influence of these characteristics, consider several ideal types generated by combining my parameter estimates with values representing the specific characteristics in a simulation (Figure 2). The many small influences of labour market characteristics, when taken together, make for a few substantial differences, especially as far as the issue of government control over MNCs is concerned. For instance, in 1986 an overseas born, 25-year-old man, living in a big Australian city such as Sydney or Melbourne, who left school after Year 8 and is working as a tradesman for a private sector employer, supervising several people is likely to rate MNCs at about 48 points out of 100, at the 'neutral feelings' point of the scale. (The simulation also assumes that his political views are largely middle-of-road and he has no particular feelings towards tariffs or foreigners.) In contrast, in 1999 an Australian-born man in

Figure 2
OLS predicted mean values for two Australians: Effects of socio-demographic variables^a



his late fifties, holding a bachelor's degree with honours and working in a professional job, but not a manager, in the Public Service, with family income of \$100,000 per year, would award MNCs only 34 points.

The two men would also differ in their opinions of whether multinationals are contributing to the general good of Australia, according to the simulation (Figure 2, middle bars). The evaluation of our younger ideal-typical respondent would be around 62 points out of 100 (where 100 means 'International businesses are doing a really good job for Australia'). Our older public servant would give only 46 points, 16 points less than the young private sector worker in the middle 1980s. Both men's views fall in the neutral range between mild agreement and mild disagreement, neither strongly supporting the view that MNCs are beneficial or that they are definitely harmful, but the younger supervisor, working in the private sector leans towards a more positive view.

So it is not only private sector 'battlers' on low to lower middle incomes potentially exposed to foreign competition who have mixed evaluations of the benefits of globalisation, but also successful Australians in the sheltered public sector. This strongly suggests that self-interest is far from the whole story, when it comes to views on multinational corporations.

While on the whole some Australians fear and some appreciate the international business activities such appreciation does not wipe out a strong preference for strict governmental regulations (Figure 2, left-hand bars). This preference is held more firmly by the government sector employees in non-supervisory jobs represented in Figure 2 by the 'Older respondent'. A young supervisor with moderate family income in 1986 was likely to support government regulation of multinational corporations with 60 points out of possible 100, the predicted support for government regulation expressed by a mature public servant in 1999 was about 80 points. Over time the perceived need for regulation has been increasing net of all other factors considered in the multivariate analyses.

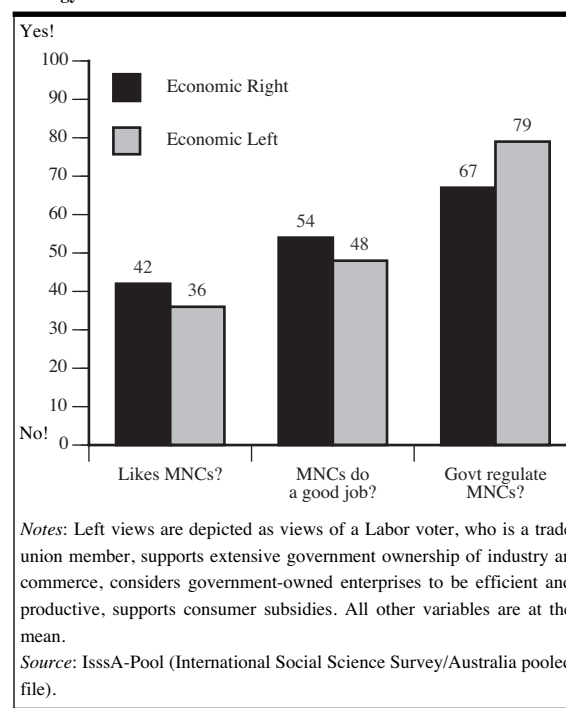
Overall, differences in demographic and labour market characteristics explain only a small part of variation in attitudes to multinational corporations. What about broader sociopolitical attitudes? Are attitudes towards multinationals derived separately from people's social locations and idiosyncratic experiences, or are attitudes towards MNCs largely generated by more general ideological commitments and attitudes, a matter of culture rather than structure?

Left ideology and attitudes to multinationals

Does commitment to the general political and economic ideology of the left, affect attitudes towards multinational corporations? For present purposes, I define commitment to Left wing ideology as being a Labor voter who is a trade union member, who supports government ownership of businesses, who considers the government sector relatively efficient and productive, and who supports subsidising consumer goods. People with these characteristics have somewhat cooler attitudes to globalisation and international corporations, according to the simulation (Figure 3 and Table 2 in the Technical Notes).⁴

A Right-winger—someone who votes Liberal and never belonged to a union opposes subsidies and government ownership of the economy—is likely to be slightly cool towards multinational enterprises. Chillier yet are the attitudes of a Labor voter, who is a trade union member and opposes marketisation and privatisation (Figure 3). Yet, the difference left-wing ideology makes is relatively small and mostly driven by party affiliation. Even the Liberal electorate feels at best reserved and lukewarm. When it comes to the issue of the contribution of MNCs to the general good, Labor voters who belong to unions are likely to perceive fewer benefits of the MNCs but the difference these perceptions make is small, and the views

Figure 3
OLS predicted mean values for two Australians: Effects of left-wing ideology



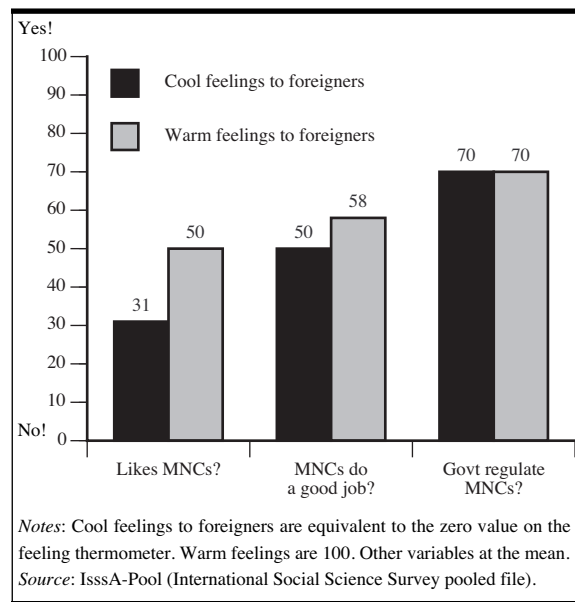
of both groups are very near the neutral point. The largest difference in opinions between the Left and the Right is over the extent of appropriate regulation where the gap exceeds 20 points out of 100 (Figure 3, right-hand bars).

Perceptions of foreignness and attitudes to multinationals

Attitudes to foreign business are also likely to be influenced by general values attached to anything that is foreign, as well as by the beliefs about capitalist corporations in general. This can have effects quite separate from the ideology of the economic Left and Right as national pride, fear of 'selling-out' of local economic resources, could correspond to anxiety that globalisation is equivalent to the loss of national sovereignty, first in the economic realm and subsequently in the political and social realms. To gauge the impact of such concerns I used a scale based on thermometer ratings of non-English speaking immigrants (see Technical Notes for details).

People with somewhat cooler feelings towards non-English speaking immigrants seem to also have more reserved attitudes towards international business. When all the other variables in the model are constrained to their mean values, a person who likes foreigners is expected to rate MNCs at about 50 points on the feelings thermometer while otherwise identical

Figure 4
OLS predicted mean values for two Australians: Effects of attitudes to foreigners



person who dislikes immigrants will rate MNCs about 20 points lower (Figure 4, left-hand bars).

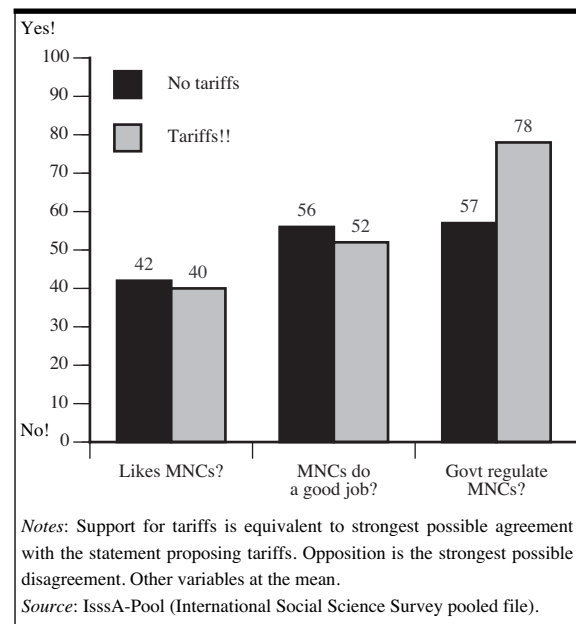
Uneasiness about foreigners also affects the perceptions of the benefits for the local economy generated by multinational companies. The difference amounts to only 8 points in terms of more favourable view of a person who likes foreigners but this difference is statistically significant. Finally feelings towards immigrants make no difference to the perceived need for greater government regulation of activities conducted by trans-national enterprises in Australia (Figure 4, right-hand bars). The expected value is 70 points for Cosmopolites and non-Cosmopolites alike.

Protectionism and attitudes to multinationals

Fear of globalisation's potential to destroy local industries plays a major role shaping attitudes to international business. The IsssA's tariff scale measures the felt need for economic protectionism in several domains: limits on importing cheap food to protect Australian farmers, protect local light industry—clothing and shoes, and protecting vehicle producers and heavy industry—steel and coal mining.⁵

Support for protectionist policies makes little difference to cool or warm feelings about MNCs net of socio-demographic differences, left and right-wing general ideology and anti-foreigner feelings. A staunch protectionist hardly differs in her cool feelings about international business from her peer who

Figure 5
OLS predicted mean values for two Australians: Effects of support for tariffs to protect Australian goods



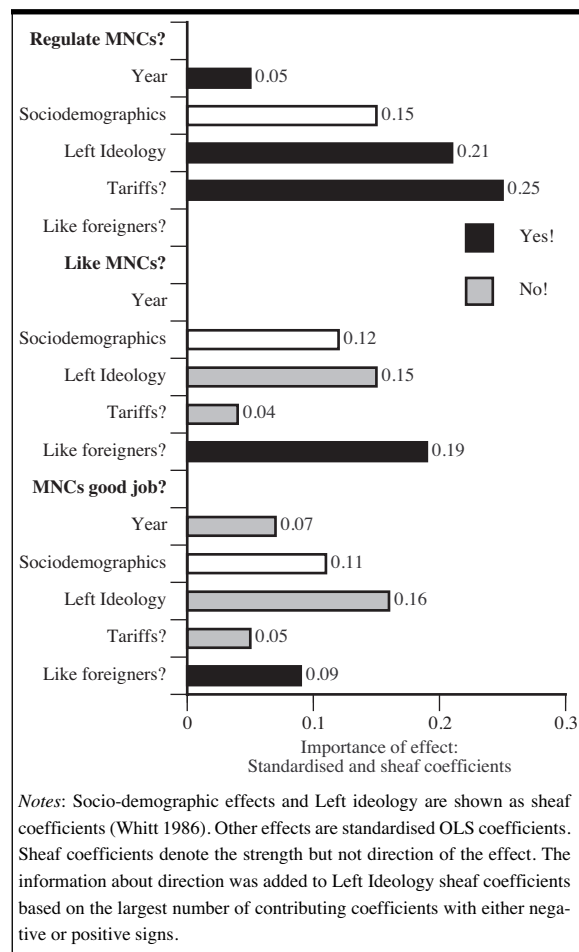
would have no barriers to any foreign goods (Figure 5, left-hand bars). The perceived benefits of MNCs are similar in the eyes of both the opponent and the advocate of protectionist policies. Yet support for tariffs makes a real difference to the desire to regulate MNCs. Logically coherent anti-protectionists voice support for looser government control of trans-nationals than do protectionists. The difference in views is substantial, adding another dimension to the gap in views on regulation found between different segments of the Australian society and between the left-oriented and right-oriented electorates.

Which variables are strong determinants of MNC attitudes

The array of variables accounted by my model accounts only for some differences in attitudes to multinationals (Technical Notes Table 2, Row 'Adj R Squared') while much is determined by other factors. The model is most useful in explaining the perceived need for regulation of MNCs and considerably less so in predicting thermometer feelings and the perceived benefits of MNCs.

All in all attitudes to multinational corporations are driven by the general pro-capitalist versus anti-capitalist ideology but also by concerns about Australian national interests and national identity. The reluctance towards international companies has the flavours of both suspicions about the future consequences of the international business activities in Australia and non-cosmopolitan feelings.

Figure 6
Factors shaping attitudes to MNCs



The perceived need for greater government control and for greater accountability of the MNCs operating in Australia is mostly driven by generalised anti-capitalist ideology and by sentiments for maintaining some elements of economic autarky (Figure 6). Over the 1980s and 1990s, support for greater regulation has been growing net of all the factors considered in this analysis: social and demographic differences, left ideology, feelings to foreigners and support for protectionism. This shift towards greater support for government regulation is not very strong, but shows a clear trend. Socio-demographic characteristics differentiate Australian views on the extent of necessary regulation, but only moderately (0.15). Far stronger are the effects of the ideology of the economic left and of support for protectionism (0.21 and 0.25 respectively).

Australians have long had stable and rather reserved feelings towards trans-national business. Time has made no difference here. Labour market characteristics—particularly government sector employment and supervisory status at work account for some

variation in these feelings (0.12). While the Left wing of the electorate is significantly cooler than the Right, what plays the most significant role in the thermometer ratings of MNCs are general attitudes to foreigners in Australia (middle panel in Figure 6). The standardised OLS coefficient summarising the effects of attitudes to non-English speaking migrants (0.19) is more important in determining feelings about MNCs than any other factor considered.

This may have implications in the future, if the proportion of foreign-born Australians continues to grow and stimulate more cosmopolitan attitudes, the perceptions of multinational corporations may become slightly more favourable, despite the fears of their predatory nature.

Over time, Australians are becoming more concerned about the possible harmful impact of MNCs on the Australian social and economic fabric (0.07). While espousing the ideology of the Left is the strongest predictor of the view that MNCs are harming the Australian economy (0.16), some socio-demographic characteristics also play a role (0.11). Warm feelings to foreigners enhance the positive evaluations of foreign direct investment by a small margin (0.09).

Summary

Australians have rather reserved attitudes to multinational corporations and want stronger government scrutiny over their activities in Australia. While Australians have always supported stronger government regulation, the desire for government to control MNCs has grown slowly, but significantly, from the mid-1980s through 1999, net of other factors.

Multinational corporations are not perceived entirely negatively in Australia, although the public tends to be rather apprehensive. For example, Australians consistently rate MNCs at only 40 points out of 100. So, while the multinational corporations may be accepted as a permanent feature of the Australian economic landscape, they are neither particularly cherished or terribly resisted. However, Australians have mixed feelings about the economic and social benefits of their presence in Australia. While in 1993 the average view was that there is some benefit (56 points), since then the balance of perception is shifting downwards towards the neutral point, as hypothesised, and although it has not reached yet the definitely negative range of evaluations, the trend suggests gradual disillusionment about the good effects globalisation has brought Australia.

In contrast to expectations from theory, educated professionals on the whole are neither more nor less

enthusiastic about multinational business than are others in the Australian society. Yet, in line with the world stratification theory the richer segments of the Australian society tend to view multinationals more favourably. Older Australians tend to be both more apprehensive about multinationals and keener on governmental control over foreign investment. Public servants are definitely more critical of multinationals than are private-sector employees.

Views about multinational corporations are strongly aligned with political cleavages. Across the political spectrum, people fear multinationals and support government wielding greater control. Yet, given that, the Liberal electorate has distinctly warmer views about international corporations and perceives significantly less need for the government scrutiny in this area.

From a different angle a general resentment towards immigrants and foreignness also drives attitudes to multinational business. Australians who feel apprehensive about non-English speaking immigrants tend to give globalisation somewhat lower ratings than do those who express warm feelings towards foreigners. This effect could reflect the anxiety

that globalisation is inextricably equivalent to denationalisation and hence to loss of not only economic but also cultural autonomy and unique identity. This factor has some potential to shift the perceptions of international business in a more favourable direction in the future, if the proportion of immigrants and their acceptance by the wider community grow over time.

Yet, national pride is only one factor among many that shape public opinion about multinational businesses. Direct preference for protectionism of local industries is strong in Australia and profoundly affects feelings about off-shore corporations. The average Australian is keen on government intervention aimed at protecting and securing preferential treatment of Australian products. Future research will determine whether these largely mixed feelings about trans-nationals will turn cooler as demands for regulating MNCs grow even stronger.

This analysis shows that the 'globalisation-institutions' and 'economic globalisation' hypotheses which imply that opposition to globalisation has been flattened find little support in the realm of public opinion in Australia. While the 'irrelevant state'

Technical Notes Table 1
Attitudes to multinational corporations: Detailed statistics. Australia, 1986–1999

	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. deviation	N
A. Correlations							
1. MNCs have too much power	1.00				71	23	10,078
2. Stronger government control over MNCs	0.68	1.00			70	25	24,289
3. MNCs: Feelings thermometer	-0.41	-0.39	1.00		41	21	16,206
4. MNCs are doing good job for Australia	-0.37	-0.33	0.46	1.00	54	21	8,088
B. Criterion variables							
Year of survey (since 1980)	<i>-0.01</i>	0.06	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>-0.07</i>	12	6	27,820
Age	0.09	0.13	<i>-0.05</i>	<i>-0.02</i>	44	16	27,235
Male	-0.08	-0.03	<i>0.01</i>	0.04	0.49	0.50	27,492
Size of city	-0.07	-0.06	0.04	0.04	1,101,011	1,193,920	25,457
Education	-0.14	-0.11	0.03	<i>0.00</i>	11	3	27,415
Occupation	-0.10	-0.07	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.01</i>	52	27	21,549
Family income	-0.15	-0.12	0.06	0.06	47,831	39,026	24,054
Self-employed	<i>-0.02</i>	-0.06	0.02	0.05	0.13	0.34	22,111
Supervisor	-0.10	-0.08	0.05	0.07	0.27	0.37	21,652
Government employee	0.04	0.09	-0.08	-0.10	0.31	0.46	22,111
Foreign born	-0.03	<i>0.00</i>	0.03	0.04	0.22	0.41	27,820
Government should own industry and commerce	0.16	0.22	-0.07	-0.12	32	17	5,403
Government-owned enterprises productive, flexible	-0.10	-0.14	0.11	0.11	73	17	5,330
Support consumer subsidies	0.16	0.20	-0.06	-0.05	51	20	5,404
Trade union member	0.05	0.09	-0.06	-0.08	0.26	0.44	23,842
Vote Labor	0.18	0.22	-0.14	-0.15	0.52	0.48	23,436
Support tariffs to protect Australian products	0.24	0.28	-0.07	-0.08	64	27	5,398
Warm feelings about foreigners	-0.08	-0.02	0.17	0.07	53	20	11,318
<i>Note:</i> Correlations coefficient not significantly different from zero are shown in italic font. All other coefficients are significant at $p < 0.01$							
<i>Source:</i> IsssA-Pool (International Social Science Survey pooled file).							

hypothesis may be in time demonstrated to hold true, the electorate, even on the Right, no doubt continues to hope fervently that the federal government will protect them from the adverse effects of globalisation.

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Technical Notes

Age is measured in years. **Male** is a dummy variable scored 1 for men and 0 for women. **Size of city** is population size in the place or residence. **Education** is in years of schooling. **Occupation** is in Kelley's (1990: 344–46) Worldwide Status Scores, which are conceptually similar to Duncan's SEI scores. **Family income** is in \$1,000s, adjusted for inflation to the year 2000. **Self-employed** is a dummy variable scored one for all self-employed and 0 for everybody else. **Supervisor** is coded 1 for everybody who supervises other supervisors, 0.5 for everybody who supervises but her supervisees do not supervise and 0 for non-supervisors. **Government employee** is a dummy coded 1 for all working in the government sector and 0 for everybody else. **Foreign born** is a dummy variable scored 1 for persons born overseas and 0 for all the others. **Year** is the survey year (scored so 1980 = 0).

Attitudes to tariffs

Attitudes to tariffs were measured by combining answer scores for the following questions: Should there be limits on imports of cheap goods from abroad in order to protect Australian jobs and industry—even though it means higher prices? Limits on importing cheap food to protect Australian farmers? Clothing and shoes—protect Australian industry? To protect Australian automobile manufacturers? Protect heavy industry, like steel and coal mining? Answer categories were: (100) Yes, high tariffs and strict quotas; (67) Moderate tariffs and quotas; (33) Small tariffs only; (0) No tariffs, free trade. Factor analysis results are available upon request from the author.

Attitudes to foreigners

Attitudes to foreigners were measured by Michigan feeling thermometer ratings (Sudman and Bradburn 1982, 158–9) ranging from 0 ('very cold or unfavourable feeling') to 100 ('very warm or favourable feeling') averaging thermometer ratings of non-English speaking immigrants: the Greeks, the Italians, the Indians, the Indonesians and the Vietnamese. Not all thermometer ratings are available in all the surveys. Factor analysis results are available upon request from the author.

Attitudes to government ownership

Attitudes to government ownership were measured by a scale comprising the following items (Sikora and Kelley 1999) Should these be owned entirely by

Technical Notes Table 2

Influence of socio-demographic characteristics, political ideology and specific beliefs about protectionism and foreigners on attitudes to MNCs. OLS regression. Australia, 1984–1999

	1. Stronger government regulation of MNCs						2. Warm feelings about MNCs						3. Are MNCs doing a good job for Australia?					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	b	Beta	t	b	Beta	t	b	Beta	t	b	Beta	t	b	Beta	t	b	Beta	t
Year of survey	0.24	0.05	2.50	0.22	0.05	2.41	-0.02	-0.01	-0.26	-0.09	-0.03	-1.17	-0.27	-0.07	-3.27	-0.29	-0.08	-3.55
Age	0.16	0.10	4.37	0.22	0.14	6.44	-0.08	-0.06	-2.49	-0.13	-0.10	-4.08	-0.03	-0.02	-0.89	-0.07	-0.05	-2.26
Male	-0.73	-0.01	-0.70	1.45	0.03	1.41	-0.29	-0.01	-0.32	0.34	0.01	0.37	0.75	0.02	0.84	0.68	0.02	0.73
Size of city	0.00	-0.03	-1.57	0.00	-0.03	-1.68	0.00	0.03	1.47	0.00	0.02	1.16	0.00	0.02	1.09	0.00	0.02	0.95
Education	-0.39	-0.05	-1.69	0.24	0.03	1.09	-0.04	-0.01	-0.21	-0.39	-0.06	-1.97	-0.10	-0.01	-0.50	-0.38	-0.05	-1.94
Occupation	-0.03	-0.04	-1.36	0.01	0.01	0.24	0.004	0.01	0.21	-0.01	-0.01	-0.56	0.01	0.01	0.46	-0.01	-0.01	-0.36
Family income	0.00	-0.07	-3.15	0.00	-0.04	-1.64	0.00	0.04	1.76	0.00	0.02	0.88	0.00	0.05	2.15	0.00	0.03	1.44
Self-employed	-3.11	-0.04	-1.97	0.66	0.01	0.44	0.47	0.01	0.35	-1.35	-0.02	-1.01	1.11	0.02	0.82	-0.81	-0.01	-0.60
Supervisor	-3.96	-0.06	-2.65	-2.35	-0.04	-1.68	3.34	0.06	2.61	2.72	0.05	2.17	3.61	0.06	2.80	2.85	0.05	2.25
Government employee	5.37	0.10	4.61	3.37	0.06	2.91	-3.70	-0.08	-3.71	-2.05	-0.05	-1.98	-4.86	-0.11	-4.85	-3.22	-0.07	-3.07
Foreign born	-0.28	0.00	-0.23	-0.22	0.00	-0.19	1.25	0.02	1.17	0.96	0.02	0.92	1.76	0.03	1.65	1.84	0.04	1.73
Govt own industry and commerce				0.10	0.07	2.93				0.00	0.00	0.08				-0.09	-0.07	-2.83
Govt enterprises productive, flexible				0.01	0.01	0.47				0.07	0.06	2.51				0.03	0.03	1.21
Support consumer subsidies				0.09	0.07	3.26				-0.02	-0.02	-0.80				0.03	0.03	1.20
Trade union member				4.37	0.08	3.64				-2.05	-0.04	-1.91				-2.58	-0.05	-2.37
Vote Labor				10.03	0.20	9.54				-5.42	-0.13	-5.76				-5.88	-0.13	-6.17
Support tariffs to protect Australian products				0.21	0.24	10.78				-0.02	-0.03	-1.37				-0.04	-0.05	-2.25
Warm feelings towards foreigners				0.001	0.001	0.03				0.19	0.18	8.38				0.08	0.08	3.55
(Constant)	69.7			26.7			43.3			42.2			56.8			64.4		
Adj. R-squared	0.05			0.17			0.01			0.06			0.02			0.06		
N	24,330			24,330			16,206			16,206			8,088			8,088		

Source: IsssA-Pool (International Social Science Survey pooled file).

the government, entirely by private enterprise, or something in-between ... The steel industry? Banking and insurance? Shops and stores? The automobile industry? Foreign trade—owned by the government or by private enterprise? Answer categories were: (100) Entirely government owned; (75) Mostly government, but with some private firms; (50) Half government, half private; (25) Mostly private firms, but some government enterprise; (0) Entirely private.

Support for subsidies

Support for consumer subsidies was measured by a scale comprising the following items: To keep prices low, should the government subsidise the production of electricity? Subsidise basic foods? Subsidise construction of houses and flats? Subsidise doctors and hospitals to keep charges low? The details and factor analyses are available in (Sikora 2003; Sikora (in press)).

Perceptions of efficiency of private and government-owned enterprises

Perceptions of efficiency of private and government-owned enterprises were measured by a scale based on the following questions: Government and private enterprises both have their good points and bad points. Which do you think is: More efficient, more productive? More flexible, responds quickly to new opportunities and new conditions? More profitable? For details and factor analyses see (Sikora 2003; Sikora (in press)).

Endnotes

¹Including two MNCs on the list of the 100 largest in 2000 (UNCTAD 2002).

²See: (Stillwell 1982) and (David, Wheelwright, and Left Book Club Co-operative 1989).

³Because the significance test is applied to a sample of more than 20,000 cases, there is not a large problem in precision of the estimates. Accordingly, it makes sense to view the non-significance of the result as indicating the absence of an effect, rather than imprecision of the estimates. The most persuasive interpretation at this point is that education and occupation have no effect on Australians views about multinationals.

⁴In this analysis I assume that political affiliation determines attitudes to multinationals although an argument can be made that people choose to vote for the Liberal party because its platform matches their personal support for globalisation (and a number of other issues). Empirical adjudication of these alternative arguments requires an additional analysis beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵For details of measurement refer to the Technical Notes.

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