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**Brave New Zealand:  
The Construction of a New National Identity**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1999, Helen Clark's New Zealand Labour Party came to power at the head of a coalition government. Central to the new government's agenda was the strengthening of national identity. In the face of increasing globalisation and individualism, the Government saw national identity as something that should be both internally protected (as the guarantor of social cohesion) and externally projected (as a source of value in global markets). The two orientations were related in crucial ways, as New Zealand identity was increasingly narrated around the attitudes and behaviours - such as creativity, innovation and entrepreneurialism - deemed necessary for global economic competitiveness. Drawing on elements of both liberal and critical political theory, and paying particular attention to the discourses deployed by political actors, I describe and critically analyse Labour's nation-building project, situating it within a broader project of economic transformation, which was itself a response to a reading of globalisation. Through a detailed examination of the Government's political practice in its main statements of intent and in three key policy areas – cultural, food production and immigration policy - between 1999 and 2007, I ask two questions. Firstly, what constraints were imposed on the assertion of a unique national identity by the Government's simultaneous embrace of global economic liberalism? And, secondly, what have been the implications of this assertion for the rights and liberties of individuals and groups within and beyond the state?

Implicit in the nation-building project was an attempt to manage internal difference for the sake of "the nation". Internal diversity could be accepted – even celebrated – in the Government's project, but only insofar as it was willing and able to contribute to an officially sanctioned vision of a shared national purpose. On this corporate conception of the state, individuals were no longer seen as subjects related by the common recognition of rules of conduct, but as role-performers related in the pursuit of a putative common purpose. The emphasis placed on the trope of the nation asserted a commonality of vision and interests that elided questions of the distribution of costs and benefits, and that marginalised dissenting ideas and perspectives.

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