Donald Hugh McMillen


As indicated in the title of this essay, it briefly introduces some key themes, central concepts and a proposed analytical framework for the selected 1st Dialogue Forum papers. It suggests one analytical framework that could be meaningful for the contextualisation, assessment and dialogue on issues treated by Forum contributors. It is based on notions associated with “glocality” (Holton 2005; Robertson 1992) as they apply to present and future ‘uncertainties’ at all levels of the world order in terms of both traditional and non-traditional security. As Booth and Wheeler (2008) have observed: 134 & 138) an ‘existential uncertainty’ lies in all human relations, and especially in the arena of international politics. In their words: ‘for many, fear makes the world go around’, and ‘future uncertainty appears therefore to construct international politics as an inescapable insecurity trap.’ The view here is that one could extend these observations beyond traditional "Realist" thinking and consider, in the wider spatial domains of the present day, that frequently states are no longer the only—or even the primary—actors, and that “fears” about human (in)security are less bounded by territoriality. As recent events connected to terrorism, climate change, resource and energy depletion, and the global economy have shown, all states and societies are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of ‘glocal’ forces that frequently operate beyond their control and foster any number of related challenges.

Donald Hugh McMillen with Mingxian Su

‘Traditional and Non-Traditional Security: Addressing the “Glocal” Dimensions of Uncertainty in the early 21st Century’

To illustrate relevant points raised in the Introductory essay as to how the dimensions of traditional and non-traditional security and the factors related to uncertainty, security and sustainability seem to ‘dovetail’ in today’s more glocalised world, this essay draws on the authors’ recent initial research about ‘Australia and “People Beyond the State”: Researching Expatriate Identities, Citizen Security and States’ Jurisdictions—Case Studies of the People’s Republic of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’. In focusing on ‘expats’, it poses a number of questions about the notions of ‘glocality’ and considers the challenges faced by expats from Australia in the PRC and the HKSAR and, ultimately, by expats in Australia from those jurisdictions (as well Aussie repatriates who have resided in those places.) Among these very real challenges, now increasingly recognised by their home/host governments and societies, are such expats’ continuing search for identity, appropriate conditions of citizenship, and senses of broadly based security.

Michael Wesley

‘Transnational Crime and Security Threats in Asia’

Transnational issues have been affecting international relations since the 1970s, acknowledged intellectually but not practically by the national security structures of states until late in the 1990s. The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and the ensuing War on Terror — which has had to confront along with terrorism the problems of proliferation, illicit financial flows, irregular people movements, the drug trade, networks of criminal facilitators and corruption — have brought transnational issues to the forefront of national security. Transnational threats are here to stay as issues of practical national security importance, not
the least for having changed permanently the logic of strategic competition and alignment among states. And they are certainly permanently established as enduring features of Asia’s international relations.

I define ‘transnational’ as any activity that originates from within society (rather than from within the decision structure and resources of the state), is commissioned and undertaken by agents operating in several national jurisdictions and is transmitted or replicated across national borders. Following international conventions, I define ‘crime’ as conduct constituting an offence according to the laws adopted by states and international organizations. A ‘security threat’ is defined as an activity or known intent to degrade the safety, property or values of society, and ultimately the independence or viability of the state. In this paper, I will begin by examining the nature and causes of transnational crime and security threats, and how they threaten states and societies. I then evaluate seven types of crime and security threat against a framework of state and societal vulnerability.

Roger C. Stone

‘Connecting the Dots—Climate Information Has No Value Unless It Changes a Management Decision: Some Illustrative Cases’

Recent studies on the sensitivity of major industrial and community sectors in many countries show a 4% variability in production and income associated with climate variation, with agriculture, energy, mining and tourism being the worst affected. In Australia, it is estimated that 70-80% of businesses have to cater for weather and climate fluctuations that can cause, in gross terms, up to 2% variability in Australian gross domestic. As a component of this larger variation, ‘farmers, agricultural industries and many rural agencies are all swimming in very stormy seas of risk, with and without formal climate information and forecasts’ (Anderson 2005).

To aid adaptation to climate change and to assist season-to-season management on a yearly basis, forecasts of seasonal climate provide a unique way of assisting managers and policy makers plan for major fluctuations in climate. Over time, risk managers by applying seasonal climate forecasts, may develop a useful management tool that can aid many decisions that are also appropriate for the longer-term climate change period ahead. For example, recurring seasonal climate forecasts over a number of years for drought conditions in a cereal growing region may cause, through related and appropriate management processes, a shift in cropping regime and management that will have pay-offs for the longer term, especially if drought-type conditions were more likely under climate change in these circumstances.

However, identifying these key ‘decision-points’ in industry, government aid programs, farming operations and similar activities where climate information may provide value, is not a simple task. Decisions appropriate for industry and government are made across a range of management options for widely varying time periods ahead. These decisions may or may not be related to fluctuations or change in climate making the process complex. Furthermore, the developmental processes for climate forecasts need to be made with the decision system in mind as part of the overall systems approach and process. Otherwise climate forecasts and climate information systems may have no value at all (Stone and Meinke 2005). Examples are provided that illustrate some of the decision matrices involved in climate-decision processes and some practical aspects associated with decision processes, especially in the agricultural sector.

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1 The involvement of state agencies makes an activity international rather than transnational.
2 Transnational activities are those that are advanced intentionally by their agents; “transboundary” phenomena are events that occur across national borders but not as a result of the intentional efforts of agents to carry out these effects; thus terrorism and crime are transnational, while pollution, pandemics and resource degradation are transboundary.
3 See Article 2(c) United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime
References:


Michael Heazle

‘Uncertainty as Deus Ex Machina in Climate Policy’

This paper argues that in highly complex policy issues like climate change, where uncertainty is high and ‘values in dispute’, the linear rationalist model’s positivist expectations of specialist advice create a dichotomy between ‘wait and see’ and ‘precautionary’ policy responses, which causes the inherently political dimensions of policy making to become obscured by often unresolvable disputes over competing knowledge claims. Ironically, both sides of the policy debate rely on science to legitimize their respective positions while also using uncertainty issues to undermine opposing views. Moreover, this ‘scientification’ of politics leads to the invocation of various ‘nightmare’ scenarios as justification for either policy action or inaction, depending on the values being pursued, at the expense of policy responses aiming to hedge against rather than eliminate uncertainty and risk.

William T. Tow and Richard Rigby

‘Insecurities and Uncertainties: Fostering Pragmatic Sino-Australian “Security Relations”’

How Asia-Pacific order-building is evolving is now a central issue for those assessing contemporary international relations. The global financial crisis, combined with uncertainty over the long-term ramifications of growing Chinese power, is fueling an intensifying debate over that order’s viability and long-term stability. Recent adjustments in China’s foreign policy doctrines, including the pursuit of a ‘New Security Concept’ and, more recently, a ‘harmonious world’ have been challenged by those who charge Beijing with entertaining aspirations to lead a more ‘hierarchical’ regional security order and with being insufficiently transparent about its ultimate military and geopolitical objectives. Australia has an immense stake in this debate, having recently proposed the creation of an ‘Asia Pacific Community’ to manage regional security politics.

This paper argues that while China has become more comfortable with multilateral security diplomacy over the past decade, it is still struggling to identify and implement how to apply its
foreign policy doctrine in ways that will complement the ‘middle power diplomacy’ of Australia and that projected by other key players in Asia-Pacific security relations. Until this adjustment is successfully implemented, it is unlikely that China will command sufficient confidence from its neighbours to dissuade them from hedging against Chinese power and interests by encouraging the United States to remain strategically active in the region. Alternatively, they could reserve their option for reverting to containment-style politics directed toward China in the event of future regional conflicts erupt involving that country. After evaluating major recent trends in China’s multilateral regional security diplomacy, we apply Sino-Australian relations as a ‘test case’ for gauging the relative success and future credibility of Chinese security policy. We conclude by offering some basic observations for how Chinese policy might be adjusted over time to correlate or ‘harmonise’ with regional patterns of middle power diplomacy.

James E. Coughlan

‘Asian Intranational and Transnational Migration Flows and Their Regional Implications for Asian Security into the 21st Century’

Since 1975, the world has witnessed some monumental events—the liberation of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in 1975, the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, the 2008 global financial meltdown, and the 2009 inauguration of the first person of African ancestry to head a Western democratic government. All of these events, except the latter (to date) have precipitated, directly or indirectly, large population movements, and both the events themselves, as well as their aftermaths, have furnished new challenges to human and national security.

This paper seeks to briefly address some of the more traditional factors which have had some impact upon migration, and thus migration’s security implications, within the Asian-Western Pacific region over the past three decades. The paper notes, but does not discuss in detail, some of the non-traditional factors, such as major environmental concerns, which will impact upon regional security concerns in the near future.