A BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY: THE “GLOCAL” DIMENSIONS OF UNCERTAINTY IN THE EARLY 21st CENTURY—SOME THEMES AND A PROPOSED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

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Borrowing from a recent study by this author (McMillen 2009), this initial essay suggests one analytical framework that is meaningful for the contextualisation, assessment, focal coherency and dialogue on issues treated by 1st Annual Dialogue Forum participants. It is based on notions associated with glocality (Holton 2005; Robertson 1992) as they apply to present and future ‘uncertainties’ (and ‘certainties’) 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.’ Whatever one’s views, the belief 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, pandemic threats, and the global economic crisis 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. Of course, as is to be emphasised repeatedly, the continued salience of nation-states is not wholly dismissed.

The proceedings of the Forum touched on a broad range of issues of significance to the interests and relations of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Australia, their adjacent regions, and the more global realm. Analytical treatment of the targeted issues were placed in the context of a number of important events, concerns, and on-going ‘transitions’ that are variously underway in this present era of ‘contemporary accelerated globalisation’ (CAG)1. More particularly, and very correctly so in these writers’ view, the deliberations also critically delved into the more local conditions, views of life and attitudes, perceptions of historical events, and the contours of states’ policies that have had, and will continue to have, profound effects on various actors and peoples.

‘Glocality’ as a Framework of Analysis

1Globalisation’, a widely debated phenomenon, has been used in both popular and academic literature to describe a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age. Here, it is taken to mean a set of complex transnational (and trans-social/cultural) processes stimulated in largely by rapid developments in global economics and technology that have engendered a heightened interconnectedness, a movement towards greater interdependence and integration, and a multiplication, intensification and acceleration of social exchanges and activities amongst individuals and other actors so that the world is increasingly seen and experienced as a single place [Scholte 2005]. Steger [2003] argues that it is best thought of as a multidimensional set of social processes that resist being confined to any single thematic framework, reaching deeply through transformative powers into the economic, political, cultural, technological and ecological dimensions of contemporary social life. Globality, he argues, signifies a social condition characterised by the existence of global economic, political, cultural and environmental interconnections and flows that make many extant borders and boundaries irrelevant. Conversely, globalisation refers to a set of on-going social processes that are thought to transform our present social condition into one of globality, albeit unevenly in both spatial and temporal terms.
Conceptually, the notion of *glocality* presents us with a context wherein continuing ‘Great and Little Games’ are constantly being played-out as components of contests or competition at all levels in global space. This *glocality* reflects a degree of ‘seamlessness’ between the macro and the micro affairs of actors within and between states, often involving other non-state actors, from virtually everywhere—both proximate and distant. In any case, it accounts for the fact that the immediate lives of ‘everyday peoples’ (who, in China, would be called the *laobaixing*) are variously affected. As Baylis and Smith (2005: 8) suggest, ‘the processes of increasing “interconnectedness” between societies is such that events in one part of the world more and more impact on peoples and societies far away.’ Their view holds that ‘the world is increasingly seen and experienced as a single place’ (whereby if someone in New York City sneezes, others elsewhere, say in Beijing or Canberra, could catch a cold).

In a brief, but brilliant, discussion of globalisation, Anthony McGrew (2005, cited in McMillen 2009: 5-6) has noted that [with some additions by the author, in italics]:

The growing *extensity, intensity, and velocity* of global interactions is associated with a *deepening* enmeshment of the local and the global in so far as local events may come to have global [and regional] consequences and global [and regional] events can have serious local consequences creating a growing collective awareness or consciousness of the *world as a shared social space*.

Rather than social, economic and political activities being organized primarily on a local or national scale, they are also increasingly organized on a trans-national or global [*glocal*] scale. This is not to argue that territory and borders are now irrelevant, but rather to acknowledge that under conditions of globalization their *relative significance*, as constraints upon social action, and the exercise of power, is declining. In an era of instantaneous, real-time global communication and organization, the distinction between the *domestic* and the *international, inside and outside the state, breaks down*.

McGrew goes on to equate this with a form of ‘relative de-nationalisation’ of power, in so far as, in an increasingly interconnected global system, power is organised and exercised on a trans-regional, trans-national, or trans-continental basis. In a similar fashion, Holton (2005: 22) has argued [again with some additions by the author, in italics] that:

To be “glocal” means the *combination of global and local elements within human activities*. Examples include local marketing by global corporations, or the environmentalist practice of thinking globally but acting locally. *Glocalization*, meanwhile, is the process whereby ‘*glocal fusions*’ take place.

The term “glocal”, while not widely used in academic or popular debate [*and considered by some as being a clumsy and vague term*], nonetheless has a significant presence in a range of areas from business and management, to city-to-city collaboration and social movements seeking to empower civil society to combat market-based globalization and the power of multinational corporations.

Holton’s thoughts draw on a core insight of Roland Robertson’s seminal discussion of ‘global fields’ (2005: 25-44), which reasoned that much which might be called global or local may be better regarded as a ‘syncretic’, albeit a complex and shifting, mix of both elements which thereby creates glocal rather than global relationships. In other words, the global and the local *’interpenetrate’* rather than maintain a distinct free-standing character (Robertson 1992: 64). The idea of glocal dimensions of social life is a key example of the more general trend that Robertson refers to as *‘relativisation’*, which involves the combination
(interpenetration) of what he sees as universal and particular aspects of social life. In Figure 1.1, the author depicts such ‘glocal continua’, recognising that some ‘elements’ (in brackets) are fungible.
Therefore, one could suggest that in this era of CAG (see, e.g., Scholte 2005; Baylis and Smith 2005; and Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008), it seemed appropriate to analytically consider this concept of glocality in the Forum’s reflections about actors’ thoughts and actions related to the issues treated. Perhaps the recent musings of a young Australian schoolgirl (see Figure 1.2) capture similar feelings—and ones that are likely held glocally:
Figure 1.2
‘A Different Skin’

I am a person who was born to live in a skin with a different colour than yours.
I could not choose my parents, nor you yours.
The colour pigments embedded in your skin by the unchangeable hands of nature
Are perchance white, while mine are black, brown or yellow.
But underneath, I am just like you.
My muscles ripple with the same waves of power, and thrill to the same throbs of joyous action.
My mind has the same functions as yours.
I reach out, just as you do, in aspirations of the soul.
I love and hate, hope and despair, rejoice and suffer, along with you.
When my children lose fair chances at life, and become aware of the bitter road of prejudice they must
tread,
Then I know what my colour has cost them.
I offer you my hand in rebuilding an unjust world, a world you and I must make better than we found.
I am a person of a different skin.


Putting aside the fact that globalisation/glocalisation processes do remain uneven (‘asymmetrical’) and in
many cases unfair, it seems reasonable that glocality can provide an interesting and coherent analytical
framework that draws attention to ‘fusions’ between global and local processes and players—whether
configured by states, other actors (including cities, business enterprises, social movements, or individuals).
One could suggest that such dimensions as socio-cultural identity, human security, economic and resource
development, the world’s environment, jurisdictional controversies, and pandemic threats, can and should
be included as features that heretofore have tended to be focused primarily on territorial states’ ‘national
security’ outlooks and policies. As Chief Rabbi (Australia) Jonathan Sacks (2006: 4) has noted [emphasis
added by the author, in italics]:

Throughout history and until very recently most people (for most of their lives) were
surrounded by others with whom they shared a faith, a tradition, a way of life, a set of
rituals and narratives of memory and hope. Under such circumstances it was possible to
believe that our truth was the only truth; that our way was the only way. Outsiders were
few, dissidents fewer still. That is not our situation today. We live in the conscious
presence of ‘difference’. In the street, at work, and on the television screen we constantly
encounter cultures whose ideas and ideals are unlike ours. That can be experienced as a
profound threat to identity….

Religion is one of the great answers to the question of identity. But that, too, is why we
face danger. Identity divides. The very process of creating an ‘Us’ involves creating a
‘Them’—[that is,] people not like ourselves. In the very process of creating community
within borders, religion can create conflict across borders.

One could extend this thinking to an assessment of the recent intensification of ‘asymmetrical conflict’
ilustrated by the recent American-led ‘Global War on Terror’, within which notions of glocality seem to have
shaped actors’ policies and actions, such as those based on the US doctrine of pre-emption (or what has
been termed the ‘paradigm of prevention’) that appear to be utilised to promote ‘distant’ American (and
some others’) national interests in the face of threats or challenges by any state or non-state actors. This is
the ‘Them’/‘Us’ equation applied to any locality, world-wide.
Arguably, there has been a recent (and again glocal) tendency for some comparatively powerful ‘extra-regional players’ to focus on the more macro dimensions of their perceived security interests in various global regions—out of self-interest and, frequently, at the expense of the micro conditions of life at the local levels. Moreover, there is a need to recognise that embedded within the glocal continua there are many crucial extant and nascent processes (and for some, ‘missions’ or ‘dreams’) that remain unfinished, such as: the establishment and management of global institutions (and regimes) that provide governance that is accepted as just and accountable; the maintenance or construction of extant or new integrated and more than nominally independent nation-state entities (Timor Leste?); the challenges of managing many as yet unfulfilled aspirations of evolving ‘imagined communities’ (see Anderson 1983); and the struggle of individuals to ‘make a fair go of it’ so as to have access to necessary resources and opportunities in their lives—both locally and in wider spheres.

The seeming ‘remoteness and otherness’ of some global spaces (and peoples) are factors long emphasised in scholarly works. One only needs to be reminded that in many societies around the world there remains a deep economic and cultural (life-style and even spiritual-like)—attachment to ‘the land’ (even considering how harsh nature has so often made life on it). This is no less the case for traditionally more rural (agrarian and/or nomadic) peoples than it is for urban dwellers. Beyond ‘land/place’, socio-economic factors and ethnicity—especially in cultural and religious contexts—have variously shaped identities and notions of ‘difference’ amongst local peoples, and have also partially oriented their thinking towards ‘other centres’ (real or potential) as alternatives to any constructed ‘nation-state centre’.

But, these dimensions of ‘remoteness and otherness’ are conditioned quite differently in the early 21st century. To a significant degree, the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) that continues to shape the current era of CAG has allowed such places/peoples to at least begin to ‘overcome geography’. The relative remoteness and isolation of many places/peoples, as contoured in the past, have been substantially eroded as distance and borders at all levels now are, or can be, transcended by freer flows of goods, capital, people, information and ideas. And, this has taken on ‘added value’ as the strategic worth and the wealth of resources under such lands has come to be recognised. The on-going ICT revolution, involving satellite television, laptops, mobile phones, and other smarter innovations, has especially contributed to this. Even in terms of memory and identity, the senses of remoteness and otherness long felt by local peoples (or imposed on them by others) thus may be slowly shifting towards a mindset of greater ‘connexity’, if not of ‘liberation and recovery’, as a consequence of this revolution in technology—despite the efforts of some state authorities to prevent or limit it.

This recent enhanced networking amongst locals, and with others elsewhere, has the potential for both greater contest and increased dialogue and cooperation. Importantly, it also opens the way for a possible re-shaping of political (and other) ‘communities’ (see Linklater 2005: 706-26), and offers a number of vehicles to achieve it—including more borderless financial, trade and other transactions, greater access to knowledge, increased cross-border movements of peoples, more ‘clever’ organisational skills and patterns, and even access to better intelligence and weapons systems. John Urry (2003: 255-74), for instance, has argued that the conceptual tools we use to make sense of societies, as ‘bounded areas of social life that
correspond to the territories of nation-states', are less and less adequate to the task of making sense of 'emerging flows of social life and conflict that are increasingly global.' He suggests that, increasingly, such technologies are the 'media' through which social relationships are constructed and widened. In a similar vein, Manuel Castells (1997: 5-24) has argued that globalisation represents a 'planetary shift to a network society':

The fundamental dilemma in the network society is that political institutions are not the only site of power any longer. The real power is the power of instrumental flows, and cultural codes, embedded in such networks. Therefore, the assault to those immaterial power sites, from outside their logic, requires either the anchoring in eternal values, or the projection of alternative, communicative codes that expand through networking of alternative networks. That social change proceeds through one way or another will make the difference between fragmented communalism and new history making. [additional words inserted by the author, in italics]

Therefore, the suggestion here is that access to such technologies (and any collateral networking) by peoples in/across many localities perhaps may now be comparatively limited, but nonetheless it is increasing (see also Holton 2008). One needs only to note how both nation-state and non-state actors (such as terrorist cells, trans-national criminal entities, and global advocacy groups) have utilised such features associated with CAG in the service of their agendas, glocally.

These above themes and issues, as well as the suggested framework of analysis based on glocality, are discussed in greater depth in a case study presented in the next chapter. Indeed, they also are highlighted in the other essays of this volume.

Sources


Sacks, Chief Rabbi J., quoted in Hon. Andrew Robb (Member of Goldstein and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Australia), “In Support of a Formal Citizenship Test: address to the Jewish National Fund Gold Patron’s Lunch,” Melbourne, 25 October 2006, p. 4.


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