VISIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: The Twenty-first Century Perspective

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Globalization is often thought of as either the domination of one powerful nation-state over another, or the wholesale commoditization of society, in which large multinational corporations and their fluid capitals are usually the driving force. Rejecting both views, this article argues that the globalization process is far more complex and multidirectional in its probable consequences. More significant, it is beyond predictability to suggest what might be the actual outcome of globalization, of which both the global and the local are dynamically at play. What appears to take place instead, is the sense of cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism, felt in various ways and differing degrees among peoples across nations, communities and ethnicities. Hence, this is the reality and the immediate confronting issue that all global citizens must find the way to cope with, and seriously take it into account. How one reacts to globalization today, then, may shape and even influence what the world will be like for our future generations.
VISIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: The Twenty-first Century Perspective

Introduction

Early in the twenty-first century, the global spread of the term globalization is evident. Anthony Giddens (1999: 7) makes a similar point to illustrate how the concept has been discussed, particularly in the last decade in many countries: the French term for globalization is mondialisation, it is globalizacion in the Spanish translation, while it is called globalisierung in German. Discussion of it is also to be found everywhere from political speeches to business manuals. Perhaps, it is because ever since the 1990s, there has been a “significant acceleration in the rate at which globalization has become apparent at the level of experience of everyday life” (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. 1997: x). Moreover, the term has become such a taken-for-granted idea because it suitably captures and articulates conventional – and even comfortable – thoughts for such a wide variety of interests (Seaton 1997: 240). Nevertheless, the concept will be misunderstood if it is thought of solely in terms of economic interdependence, and the mere existence of global interconnections. Globalization is, in fact, very complex and involves much more than that.

Conceptualizing Globalization

In general, globalization signifies two characteristics. Firstly, it connotes the idea of the world as a whole, the world as a single place or space. Secondly, it suggests the changing concept of time-space reordering. The first of these - a consciousness of the world as a single space, is best summarized by Mike Featherstone (1995: 172) who points out that globalization “entails the sense that the world is one place, that the globe has been compressed into a locality, that others are neighbors with whom we must necessarily interact, relate and listen.” Featherstone is even tempted to elaborate further that the density of contacts between nations will itself lead to a global culture. As he aptly says in the August 1999-issue of the National Geographic magazine: “we are all in
each other’s backyard.” Driven by a mixture of political and economic influences, globalization actually encompasses a much wider and more complex area, since it is transforming the very social institutions in which people’s lives are played out, even in the case of those living in the poorest regions (Giddens 1998: 30-3). This transforming experience can be felt by actual physical relocation from one place to another, as it becomes much easier and much cheaper for people to travel. Or it can take the form of “mind traveling,” in which people, influenced by media images and messages, imagine the world outside their immediate, face-to-face locales. Stuart Hall (1995: 190) reasons that:

> the relative separate areas of the globe come to intersect in a single imaginary space; when their respective histories are convened in a time-zone or time-frame dominated by the time of the West; when the sharp boundaries reinforced by space and distance are bridged by connections (travel, trade, conquest, colonization, markets capital and the flows of labor, goods and profits) which gradually eroded the clear-cut distinction between “inside” and “outside”

This means that different parts of the globe have become increasingly, as well as intensively, enmeshed and interconnected. It seems that every corner of the world is now “linked up,” though it is by no means entirely integrated. Neither is globalization neutral and fair in its effects, though. Some peoples and some communities are more affected by it, while others experience less so. This implies that not everyone is now, and ever will be, taking part in the process equally, due to the uneven nature of globalization. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that parts of globe are now “connected” as never before. Related to this notion is the second characteristic of time-space reordering. David Harvey (1989: 240) introduces the concept of “time-space compression” which “so revolutionizes the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite a radical way, how we represent the world to ourselves.” Moreover, the world, it seems, collapses “inwards” upon us because:
As space appears to shrink to a “global village” of telecommunications and a “spaceship earth” of economic and ecological interdependencies -to use just two familiar and everyday images- and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is (the world of the schizophrenic), so we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds.

The human world is no longer a mere world of religious faith and cosmology. The reordering of time and space has an impact on most peoples’ everyday life. This changing experience of time and space in social life that Harvey describes above, has much in common with what Anthony Giddens calls “time-space distanciation” (1990: 14). For Giddens, globalization is considered as one of the most visible consequences of modernity, which is itself “globalizing.” To be sure though, globalization is not something that just happened overnight. Although media references to it have become common recently, the concept itself can be traced back to much earlier periods. In the premodern era, the scope for enduring global interactions - particularly transport and communications - was constrained by available technology (Held et al. 1999: 415-31). Some parts of the world remained untouched by the infrastructures of globalization altogether. Interaction and exchange between cultures were limited to fragments of the military and political elites, and merchant adventurers and travelers. Later, access to the wealth and surplus of the New World and the stimulus of inter-imperial rivalry all contributed to the development of new power technologies and institutions within Europe. Antonio Gramsci (1971: 416-7) points out the hegemony of “Western” culture over the whole world, whereby different cultures have had an importance, in so far as they have become constituent elements of European thought and been assimilated by it in the process of hierarchical unification of world civilization. It was also in this period that “modernity” came to materialize. France was the first to experience it, breaking up with its old feudal past through what usually known as the “French revolution.” Soon after, Britain went through a process of reform after the loss of American colonies.
In modern globalization (1850-1945), European power stretched into almost all of the accessible areas of the globe - the scramble for Africa, the dismemberment of China, the colonization of much of North Africa and Southeast Asia, and the opening up of Japan. The era saw very extensive as well as intensive patterns of economic globalization. "Cultural" patterns and interconnections also intensified, as new technologies of communication and transport were diffused, and the threat and consolidation of European empire across the globe forced other societies into an "unequal" cultural encounter with Europe and the United States. Global communication infrastructures were transformed both by the transportation revolution of the era and the creation of transoceanic telegraphy. With access to these networks, political, military and economic elites in the West were more closely and quickly informed about distant events in the world at large than ever before. Further, European imperialism has shaped what the world has become today through practices such as map-making and nation building (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997). After 1945, globalization has been marked by unprecedented intensity and extent. Whereas previous epochs were dominated by the collective or divided hegemony of Western powers, notably Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and Holland, the contemporary era can claim to have only a single potential hegemonic power: the United States. Moreover, the contemporary era’s cultural and communicative global infrastructure is distinguished by the dominance of a single language, which is English - as a genuine global lingua franca. Whereas the vast majority of cultural interactions in previous eras were elite to elite, the majority of the contemporary interactions have been through popular cultural media and artifacts. Although the European model of state administration and industrialized production and urban living form the core of processes of globalization, this “global culture” is no longer the sole property of Europeans or Westerners (Spybey 1997). The recent development of global networks of communication and complex global systems of production and exchange “diminishes the grip of local circumstances over people’s lives” (Giddens 1990: 18). Furthermore, social relations and interaction in today’s world are not dependent upon simultaneous physical “presence” within a specific location, since communication technology has facilitated and fostered intense “relations between absent others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction (ibid.)” To be sure, face-to-face communication in a specific local
community is still a primary source and resource of human social relations, but the imagined world mediated by communication technologies increasingly adds another dimension to people’s everyday lives.

The presence-absence duality allows for social experience to “lift out” and be embedded, or disembedded, in different and distant localities. This mindframe of the globe as a single place, and the ability to lift oneself out of the fixed locality is best illustrated in Appadurai’s five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (1996: 33-6). In brief, Ethnoscapes refer to the landscapes of people who constitute the shifting world in which one’s life is situated. Men and women from villages in Thailand are induced to think not just of moving to Bangkok but to Taipei and Singapore, let alone other more materially affluent parts of the world. The second dimension, Technoscapes mean the high-speed movement of technology across boundaries. For instance, Thailand’s economic boom of the 1980s and early 1990s was partly due to the country’s cheap labor, which attracted large-scale foreign investment and technical know-how. The third dimension, Financescapes describes the disposition of global capital that is not only rapid but also mysterious. Currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move, “megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed,” in Appadurai’s words. A number of Asian countries in the early 1990s, namely Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand, competed with one another to be the site of the regional “financial hub” due to the attractiveness, albeit somewhat exaggerated, of international money flows.

The fourth dimension, Mediascapes are both the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, and the distribution of the images of the world “created” by the media. Mediascapes tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer is a series of elements out of which scripts can be formed of “imagined” lives - their own as well as those living in other places. Lastly, Ideoscapes, are to do with political ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements, which challenge states themselves. The fluidity of ideoscapes is complicated in particular by the growing diasporas of intellectuals who continuously
inject new meaning-streams into the discourse in different parts of the world. In Thailand, many terms which originated in the West such as “civil society” and “good governance” have entered the Thai lexicon in the 1990s as prachasangkhom and dhammarat or dhammapibarn respectively, resulting in a new discourse, which may or may not share with its origin the same meaning and connotation.

Globalization then, is a complex process that constitutes a consciousness of the globe as a single space - both physical and imaginary, in which the social experience of time-space is reordered by the sense of being compressed or distanciated, or probably both, generating transregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power on the global scale. Having discussed the notion of globalization, it is now appropriate to turn to the subject of human agents who participate in the general discourse of globalization. In the process, globalization is viewed and interpreted differently by intellectuals, politicians and business owners and professionals who all share the same intention of trying to make sense of the process and its consequences.

The Globalists: the Borderless World and the Global Village

The first vision of globalization foresees the world without any barriers. Taken broadly by the globalists, the process is seen as the coming of a new era when “less hard and dirty work, cleaner, more interesting work, and a more rational political and economic system has emerged” (Seaton 1997: 243). Moreover, it is mainly middle-class professionals who are attracted to this brighter-future vision, largely because it is this group, which is presumed to inherit this epoch. One chief proponent of this view is the wealthy Microsoft entrepreneur Bill Gates, who is quoted as saying, “we are all created equal in the virtual world” (ibid.: 244). The information revolution, it is assumed, will lead to a stable, socially desirable future. Anthony Giddens (1999: 8) observes that from this perspective, globalization is “not only real but also powerful, so much so that nations have lost most of the sovereignty they once had, and politicians have lost most of their capabilities to influence events.” As a result, the idea of the global village (McLuhan 1964), of the whole world united through long-distance communication technologies has gained renewed popularity with a number of televised historical events.
It is through the representational practices of Ted Turner’s Cable News Network (CNN) that the Gulf War could be watched by billions in dispersed living rooms worldwide, confirming Turner’s self-proclaim ambition to turn the world into “one big global audience” (Ang 1991: 4). In The Borderless World, Kenichi Ohmae (1999: 19) shares with Bill Gates and Ted Turner the prediction that, “people everywhere are more and more able to get information they want from all corners of the world.” This viewpoint generally privileges “an economic logic, and celebrates the emergence of a single global market and the principle of global competition as the harbingers of human progress” (Held et al. 1999: 3), where information flows with relative freedom, thus, “the old geographic barriers become irrelevant” (Ohmae 1999: 22). But is it really true that “we all” share the same information as Ohmae claims? Branded as an extreme globalization theorist (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 185), Ohmae contends that only global market forces and transnational corporations really matter in the world economy; and neither of them is subject to public governance. In one of his examples, Japanese people can now watch CNN in their Tokyo living rooms; youngsters in Europe, America and Japan are similarly able to enjoy the programs of Music Television (MTV). It is evident that what “we” refers to is potentially a tiny number of Japanese in the case of watching CNN; and it is only some of the youngsters in Europe and Japan who follow mainstream music from the United States - in the case of watching MTV. Certainly, the combination of these small groups of CNN and MTV viewers cannot be said to represent “we all” as Ohmae conveniently claims. The majority of people across the globe may not have heard of, let alone watched, the programs of both cable channels. A great number of people still have no direct experience of either CNN or MTV, as their everyday life has never been exposed to it. As Colin Sparks (1998: 117) comments, if there is ever a “CNN-watching, Time-reading international professional class,” it is very small in numbers:

The total combined daily audience for the main prime-time news broadcasts of the two dominant British terrestrial broadcasters alone is greater than the total monthly pan-European reach of CNN. Where CNN scores is that its audience is disproportionately upmarket.
What is more, the audiences for these “global” media are disproportionately among the elite, and need to understand English or Spanish in order to benefit from it. At best, what is useful about this perspective is its recognition of the “transcendence” across geographical frontiers, in which the media certainly play a crucial role. In the field of communication, this idea has prospered in the works of the “global village” thesis, which seemingly conceives of the world without boundaries. The key theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964: 4-5) claims that electronic media have been abolishing both space and time; and in the process people have begun to live “mythically and integrally” in a global village. Following the work of this “Toronto circle” (1940s-60s), Joshua Meyrowitz (1985: 308), adapts McLuhan’s view and asserts that:

*electronic media have combined previously distinct social settings, moved the dividing line between private and public behavior towards the private, and weakened the relationship between social situations and physical places.*

Although Meyrowitz is right to suggest that electronic media offer “potential enrichment of our culture’s stock of knowledge and understanding,” he nonetheless takes a too simplistic view in his assertion that “in an electronic society, messages from all bodies of knowledge are equally accessible to all people” (ibid. 327). Not unlike Bill Gates, Ted Turner, Kenichi Ohame, and perhaps Rupert Murdoch, Meyrowitz foresees the positive scenario of “free flow of information” and “democratic participation.” From this perspective, the global village is made to sound like “everyone everywhere is joined together in some positive way by radio, television, cable and satellites, although who the chiefs of the village are, and how the village is actually run, have never been mentioned” (Lull 2000: 39). The globalists are correct to point out the transcending effect of the media and communication technologies, but the proponents of the “borderless world” and the “global village” alike, fail to take into account the divisive effect which in an important way, reinforces the existing inequality among nations. Although the constraints of time and space no longer appear to impose fixed barriers to many forms of social interaction or organization, the unevenness of globalization, which leaves some segments of the world’s population excluded from its benefits, ensures that it is far from a universally
homogenizing process experienced across the entire planet (Held and McGrew 2000: 4).

The Skeptics: Americanization and McDonaldization

If the globalists have made no mention of what sort of village the world has become, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995: 220) are not hesitant in providing the answer. It has become the “American” village. As such, it will not be a surprise if the village chief is also American, or alternatively pro-American. This is how the notion of globalization is sometimes understood. It either entails global domination of one country over another, or global commoditization. As mentioned earlier, the United States has emerged as the true world superpower after World War II: a unique status that has been reconfirmed particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. It is not difficult, therefore, to identify “America” as the source and driving engine of the globalization process. Contradicting the globalists, the skeptics view globalization as a renewal of age-old exploitation on a global scale. Given existing conditions, the process will only increase the global inequality between rich and poor, have and have-not nations. Further, the skeptics also see globalization as “an ideology put about by free-marketeteers who wish to dismantle welfare systems, and cut back on state expenditures” (Giddens 1999: 9).

Globalization then is nothing but a myth, because the world had already been internationalized in the nineteenth century when imperialism was at its height. In the twenty-first century, it is “American” imperialism, which is most dominant. Since globalization is seen to embody the mass cultural effect, America has come to be seen as the home of mass culture. This so-called Americanization was first perceived to be a threat in Britain in the nineteenth century (Strinati 1995: 22). The concept of Americanization presupposed that America had a unified culture, which is systematically imposed upon the world. In the 1920s, radio, wireless telegraphy, cars, planes, and films were most fully developed in America, their introduction “sparked off debates in the United States about their effects, while elsewhere the factor of Americanization was added to the debate” (Lewis and Slade 1994: 31). France in 1949-50, afraid of the imminent Americanization of its culture, “blindly fought
back at the most convenient, blatant symbol of American hustle - Coca-Cola” (Pendergrast 1993: 241). This is perhaps why it has been suggested that globalization is “centered in the West, and always speaks English,” although its accent is more American than British (Hall 1991: 28). In Australia, the 1950s-60s had seen a strong left-wing inflection in public discussion about communication and culture. The debate took an increasingly critical attitude to the United States’ influence, although Australians fought alongside the US in both Korea and Vietnam, and accepted communication bases linked to the Pentagon’s global surveillance system (Lewis and Slade 1994: 31-8).

Apart from the so-called Americanization, the argument of commoditization is another one that is closely linked with globalization (Appadurai 1996: 32). The debate moves away from the power of “America” as nation-state, to the giant, still largely US based, business conglomerates. Chief among these is the thesis of “McDonaldization” which George Ritzer (1996: 9-11) defines as: “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as of the rest of the world.” Ritzer’s thesis is derived directly from Max Weber’s theory of the rationalization of the West, and ultimately the rest of the world. It also implies global homogenization based on Western values and rationale, symbolized by the fact that McDonald’s has become the model to be emulated, first by other fast-food chains, and later by other types of chain stores. Altogether, these dimensions entail some logic of capitalism, which spread across the globe. One example is the story of a journalist Thomas Sutcliffe of Britain’s The Independent who wrote on 10 June 1999 about his experience of McDonaldization as follows:

*Holidaying in Thailand a few years ago, I found myself in a Bangkok McDonald’s after a fortnight of culinary experimentation. What I remember from the trip is street food, fiery papaya salads, the flavor of galangal and lime leaf. But for half an hour - shell-shocked by cultural combat - what I wanted was time out from difference. I was looking for a reprieve from sensation, an air-conditioned nullity with spotless lavatories, and almost no one is better placed to supply that than McDonald’s.*
Being a customer among 43 million people who visited one of McDonald’s 26,000 outlets in 119 countries in any given day (The Times 23/6/2000), Sutcliffe seemed happy to discover an oasis in the middle of Thailand’s capital city. Although he admitted that while it offered no thrills or revelations, for him it was a retreat to the familiarity and the known, which was “free of danger and effort.” What he was experiencing was the predictability or standardization that Ritzer is talking about. Cees J. Hamelink (1995: 111) also agrees with Ritzer; he even applies the concept to other areas, “the worldwide proliferation of standardized food, clothing, music, TV drama, Anglo-Saxon business style and linguistic convention which creates the impression of an unprecedented cultural homogenization.” McDonaldization has a negative impact on local culture. According to Hamelink (ibid.: 112),

_The aggressive around-the-clock marketing, the controlled information flows that do not confront people with the long term effects of an ecologically detrimental lifestyle, the competitive advantage against local cultural providers, the obstruction of local initiative, all converge into a reduction of local cultural space._

As Richard Pells (1997: 302-4) observes, McDonald’s and other restaurant chains identified with America became ubiquitous, first in Western Europe from the 1960s onwards, and later in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. For some, McDonald’s epitomized America’s “tawdry values” and its “disrespect” for history. The most common complaints about McDonald’s and other fast-food restaurants were that they “undermined” social and family relationships. Moreover, customers encountered the same menu, the same décor, and the same smiling uniformed employees. French elementary schools in the 1990s, in an attempt to combat McDonaldization, added to their regular curricular courses designed to teach students how to be more discriminating about what they ate (ibid.: 304).

Seen in this light, McDonaldization, just like Americanization, are all broadly perceived as “cultural imperialism.” The theory focuses on the structure of the global system, particularly the world economy. At the core of this thesis lies the “implantation of the model,” and the increasing integration of the “poor” nations into the global system.
dominated by the “rich” (Herman and McChesney 1997: 152). Another key characteristic is the equation of the global as the site of cultural erosion and destruction, and the local as the site of pristine cultural authencity. Consequently, the “implantation” effectively “defines the path that will be taken, and brings the country in question into the orbit of interest of the dominant powers” (ibid.: 153-5). The implanting model brings about negative effects, namely, the promotion of materialistic values, displacement of the public sphere with entertainment, strengthening of conservative political forces, and the erosion of local cultures. In other words, rich nations in the West, along with their multinational corporations (MNCs), have written the grammar and the rules for the rest of the world to follow.

In the field of communication, media in countries throughout the world, swayed by the US media influence, “have either franchised from, or literally copied, American TV formats” (Morley and Robins 1995: 223). America has, once again, “set the frame” for the production of television in most other countries. Those who own the American media – or Western media in general – are intimately involved in making sure that America and the West maintain their mastery over their former colonies or current client states. Thus, there is an increasing tendency for media generally around the world to be put into primarily “American” packages (Tunstall 1977: 273). Films, radio, newspapers and magazines, advertising, and so forth have become the instruments of political and social control. They, as the argument runs, turn the audiences or the masses all over the globe into robotic and passive consumers of products and entertainment, unable to distinguish between art and trash, or decide for themselves what is in their best interest. Moreover, the principal imperialists now operate out of New York or Los Angeles - rather than London or Paris, which is why it seems more urgent to defend the culture of Europe, as opposed to the “Third World” as was earlier the case (Pells 1997: 266). As it has been suggested, any effort to grasp the emerging global system has to go through Washington, Wall Street, Madison Avenue, and Hollywood (McChesney 1998: 3). Global media and communication, it is argued, are in some respects the “advancing armies” of global capitalism. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1998: 157) describes it as “the colonization of communication space.” In his reformulation of the media imperialist thesis, Boyd-Barrett (ibid.: 174)
argues that far from being a dead concept, media imperialism still has much to offer as an analytical tool. He, thus, stresses that:

the systematic patterns of ownership, industrial and technical structure, and ideology of practice that help to explain the extraordinarily limited opportunities for access to the means of production and transmission for addressing mass audiences - a scarcity of voices, a lack of diversity, that is characteristic of all countries of the world.

Media and cultural imperialism, hence, emphasize the ongoing structural system of domination on the global scale. With the existing conditions, it is not a global public sphere that can be hoped for, but "the imperialist, private sphere, of which few can fully participate, some may partially participate, and the large proportion are effectively excluded" (Sparks 1998: 122). Herbert Schiller (1999: 32-4) discusses what he views as the increasingly "concentrated corporate cultural control." Schiller also points out the inventory of America’s "soft power" - the 450,000 foreign students who are drawn to American higher education each year. That many foreign students choose to come to America to study is one thing. It is, however, quite another to assume who will really benefit from this "soft power." It is not difficult to recall that most of the nationalist leaders who won their countries’ independence and brought about the decolonization of Latin America, Africa and Asia were mostly Western-educated or the product of the West. Cultural imperialism is absolutely right in its emphasis on the system and the structure of inequality. But it is arguably inaccurate to portray globalization as all predictable, and all bad. Despite their differences, nonetheless, both the globalists and the skeptics share the view of globalization as global "homogenization." It will be argued that this is certainly not the case, since globalization fragments as it unifies (Robertson 1992). For this reason, it is preferable to move beyond the homogenizing effect implied by the proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis, and instead acknowledge the uncontrollability and unpredictability brought about by the globalization process.
Glocalization and the Glocalists

In the early 1990s, Roland Robertson (1995: 28) coined the term *glocalization* to counteract the general tendency to assume the overriding of locality by the global. Significantly, what is called “local” is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis; glocalization is thus “formed by telescoping global and local to make a blend.” According to Robertson, the idea is modeled on Japanese *dochakuka* (living on one’s own land) - the agricultural principle of adapting one’s farming techniques to local conditions. It is also adopted in Japanese business practice for “global localization” - a global outlook adapted to local conditions. It should be pointed out that Robertson’s glocalization is not meant to replace one terminology with another, but to help crystallize the idea of globalization more clearly. It also confirms the impossibility of separating the global from the local, and vice versa. The terms global and local are used “flexibly in relation to scale: the local is smaller than the global, which is the wider setting for the local” (Massey and Jess 1995: 229). Thus, the local should be seen as a “fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relation to the global” (Morley and Robins 1995: 117). Furthermore, globalization not only involves the linking of localities, it also involves the “invention” of locality, in the sense that tradition is “invented” and community is “imagined” (Robertson 1995: 53). The former is well illustrated in the *Invention of Traditions*, a series of papers edited by Eric Hobsbawn and Terrence Ranger (1983), and the latter in *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 1991). Thus, glocalization makes it possible for nation-states to “copy” ideas and practices from other societies. As a result, each nation-state may incorporate a different mix of “alien” ideas into its own existing ones.

This is what Yoshino (1992) shows in the case of Japan. He suggests that one motivation behind the thinking elites’ concern with *Nihonjinron* – Japanese uniqueness, in the 1970s and the 1980s was to promote better communication between the Japanese and non-Japanese through the “exploration and articulation of the peculiarities of Japanese behavior.” Conscious recognition of Japanese behaviors is therefore considered to be a step towards better intercultural understanding. In other words, *Nihonjinron* discourse aims to normalize and sanction Japanese differences in the eyes of outsiders. At the same time, it allows
the Japanese an opportunity, not so much to preserve, but to revive or “invent” the age-old tradition for present purposes. Afterwards, Japanese public discourse since the 1980s has shifted from Japaneseess to kokusaika - internationalization. The internationalization discourse serves to strengthen Japanese identity on the face of its incorporation of the outside world. In the process, Japanese identity relativizes and reconstructs itself along with this openness. The phenomenon is clearly seen in the Japanese advertising industry, which plays a crucial role in the contemporary merchandising of the West (Tobin 1992). For instance, George Lucas, Woody Allen, and Faye Dunaway, who are rarely seen in TV commercials in the US, have been featured in Japanese campaigns for drinks, cars, and electronic goods. Marco Della Cava (The Nation 29/3/1996) gives a colorful account as follows:

Spend enough time in front of the television set and out pops Sylvester Stallone hamming it up roaring Oishii desu ("Tasty!") - for a popular sausage company. Andy Garcia, Brad Pitt and Sean Connery (cars); Mariah Carey, Jodie Foster and Sharon Stone (cosmetics); and Harrison Ford and Mickey Rourke (liquor) have all been spokespersons for a lucrative Japanese commercial. Of foreign celebrities, the most likable are noodle pitchman–Arnold Schwarzenegger, and whiskey advertisement man–Steven Spielberg.

Given Japan’s technological advance and economic might in the contemporary age, it is not surprising that this process of glocalization - the localization of the global, has taken place on a great scale. What it means to be Japanese now takes more of the outside world - the global, in order for the self - the local, to be understood. Fixed locality no longer contains the imagination of the nation. The Other, especially the “global-occidental” others have become a major part of how Japanese identity is articulated. Viewed in this light, it makes perfect sense that Madonna, the American singer, should be paid several million US dollars to wield a sword in a traditional samurai robe for a Takara Shuza alcohol television commercial in Japan (New Idea Magazine 27/9/1997).
William O’Barr (1994: 173-5) discusses how he is startled by the representation of the West in contemporary Japanese print advertisements. The extraordinary number of foreigners appearing in contemporary Japanese advertising is one of its most distinctive features. Furthermore, O’Barr also admits that, "what I experience when studying such advertisements, which are not really intended for me as a part of their audience, are representations of myself and my culture that diverge in many ways from my own definitions of self.” The reason why there are so many Western models in Japanese advertisements, reasoned O’Barr, is to do with the relationship of Japan and the West. Despite losing World War II, Japan eventually became prosperous. Domestic affluence stands on the paradoxical use of Western models and images in Japanese advertising. Western models and images are icons of abundance and success, connoting the power and might that had been demonstrated to Japan in the war. The trend took a step further, beginning in the 1970s when advertisers began to replace unknown Western models with celebrities. The first was Charles Bronson, who endorsed Mandom toiletries for men, followed in successive years by a long list that includes Paul Newman, Michael J. Fox, Charlie Sheen, Audrey Hepburn, and so forth. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a global and up-market quality applied to the advertisements, thus the products, these internationally known celebrities endorse. It is a glocalization strategy implemented in the Japanese local context. And if globalization is centered in the West and speaks English, the example of the English language is truly a case in point. Although the English language has increasingly become the true global language, it is however “broken” English which is spoken and used largely by the majority of the world’s population. In Japan, to continue with the example, James Stanlaw (1992: 74-5) shows how the use of English in Japan is more of an internal matter, since it bears little resemblance to the English spoken or used in other countries. As a result, Japanese English is used in Japan for Japanese purposes, and should not be expected to help much in cross-cultural communication.

To return to The Burger That Ate the World example, the journalist Sutcliffe (1999) is right to observe that “what makes people go to McDonald’s in Beijing is subtly different from what makes them go in Basildon.” Jane Stokes (1999: 152-3) discusses how the advertisement of McDonald’s in Britain eschews the sense of Americanness in order
not to add negative value to their commodity-sign. The image of McDonald's, thus, is more associated with a very informal, intimate family situation within an identifiable English middle-class home; and all hint of Americanness is erased. Moreover, the McDonald’s menu is also localized, for instance, in Thailand there is McKrapao; in India there is mutton-based Maharaja Mac and vegetable nuggets; in Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, there are teriyaki burgers; and McSpaghetti in the Philippines (Lull 2000: 250). As Richard Pells (1997: 305) notices, in France, McDonald’s put less sugar and more mustard in its salad dressings, and added beer and Evian mineral water to the menu. In Italy, a customer could have insalata caprese, rather than french fries, while a salmon burger could be ordered instead of Big Mac in Norway. In Brazil, the restaurant promoted special meals with titles such as “McCarnaval” and “Lanche Carioca” (Lull 1995: 157). These modifications, or glocalization, allowed for more flexibility in responding to local tastes and local conditions. Furthermore, McDonald’s burgers can become a connotation of freedom in the case of British Asians in Southall because they represent a food, which “you don’t have to have” (Gillespie 1995: 199). As Gillespie elaborates, “as young people define themselves as individual bodies and consumers, they generally define themselves in opposition to their parents,” and that,

"the relatively humdrum, material corollary of their utopian ad talk, ... the visit with friends to McDonald’s in Hounslow is an entirely real “escape” into a new social and communicative space, in which young people can redefine their culture."

These examples confirm the interplay between “the global” and “the local,” which embraces both the localization of the global, and the global reproduction of the local. Relating to this, Ulf Hannerz’s work (1996: 65-78) on creolization is in many ways similar to Robertson’s glocalization. To him, the word “creole” has connotations of creativity and of richness of expression. Using the center-periphery model, Hannerz identifies 1) creolizing the periphery; and 2) creolizing at the center. At the periphery, “it is through the part played by more indigenous elements in the construction of ordinary practices and interactions, not exhaustively defined by outside powers, that much of
the everyday life of the periphery is creolized.” As he puts it:

creolized music, art, literature, fashion, cuisine, often religion as well, come about through such processes. The cultural entrepreneurs of the periphery carve out their own niche, find their own market segment, by developing a product more specifically attuned to the characteristics of their local consumers. The culture business of the center may have much greater material resources, but these local entrepreneurs have the advantage of knowing their territory. Their particular asset is cultural competence, cultural sensibility.

Ironically, the outcome tends to be the organizational forms, technology and culture drawn from more distant, transnational sources, even though it is developed locally. The second aspect of Hannerz’s creolization, by contrast, occurs at the center. The voice of the periphery is now heard in the center, or the global. Evident are the flows of popular culture, music and cuisine from the periphery to the core. John Tomlinson (1999: 125) observes that the “traditional” British diet of roast beef dinner, fish and chips, and jam roly-poly, until the 1950s-60s have formed a fairly uniform style for the mass of the population, but today though not disappeared, it exists as a consumption choice of “eating British” - as opposed to eating American, Italian, Chinese, Thai, Spanish or Indian. Related to this is another concept called hybridization (Pieterse 1994; 57), which not only recognizes the interplay between cultures, but also acknowledges the power relations in the process;

Relations of power and hegemony are inscribed and reproduced within hybridity for wherever we look closely enough we find the traces of asymmetry in culture, place descent. Hence hybridity raises the question of the terms of the mixture, the conditions of mixing and mélange. At the same time it's important to note the ways in which hegemony is not merely reproduced but refigured in the process by hybridization.
Pieterse’s hybridization enables us to understand how national identities can be selectively formed out of the “global-local” interplay. In one example, Marie Gillespie (1995: 46) points out that “Bhangra” music—a hybrid form of entertainment—has become very popular and now commonly performed at weddings, engagement and “coming-of-age” parties among South Asian families across Britain. It is a form and style that British Asian youth can claim as their own. And it allows for an “assimilation of the values of urban British youth culture in combination with a continued attachment to the values shared with parents and rooted in the subcontinent.” That identities, both individual and collective, are transformed by the force of globalization is clearly beyond doubt. What is apparent, at least in Thailand, is that the “modern techniques of cultural production enable virtual reality of Thai culture past and present to be fashioned, then visited and exported” (Reynolds 1998: 120).

In the case of Thailand, over time the creative use of media and cultural resources by the country’s political elites and professionals has resulted in “the construction of a modern national identity partly by relying on the power of cultural representations” (Kennedy 2001: 24). Thus, global influences are selected, accommodated and indigenized, and so turned into locally accessible and relevant resources by active, sometimes competing, national agents. Take the Grand Palace in the heart of Bangkok, for example, it used to be the administrative and religious center of the kingdom as well as the residence of the kings until the 1920s. On closer inspection, the palace has taken a number of representative elements from the outside world. As Joy Hendry (2000: 119-20) observes,

the palace has within it a long cloister with 178 panels depicting a Thai version of the Indian epic poem, the Ramayana, commissioned by King Rama I, a series of Chinese stone carvings brought from China during the reign of King Rama III, and a miniature replica of the famous Khmer temple of Angkor Wat, commissioned by King Rama IV, and completed during the reign of Rama
V, who also built the extraordinary Phra Thinang Chakri Maha Prasat, an imposing throne hall built by an Englishman in a neo-French Renaissance style, but with a roof of typical Thai-style golden spires

Thus, power relations and hegemony allow one to retain a preferred identity and discard another, in accordance with particular historic circumstances. The example of Thailand’s Grand Palace shows that over time, the country has taken influences from the outside world, which were more often than not perceived as “the global” in that particular period. The process of “glocalization” then takes place, which requires a certain degree of local adaptation to the new foreign elements. At different points in time, the symbolic essence of India/China/Cambodia/ and Europe have been represented as part of how Thai identity was formed in the Grand Palace, signifying the sources and resources of hegemonic relations of cultural power between the Thai kingdom vis-à-vis the global. Furthermore, the interplay does not limit merely to the state and its official programs; popular culture also takes part in it vigorously as demonstrated by Kasian Tejapira (2001: 150-70). The result is the negotiation and fragmentation of Thainess as an object of desire, which is often done through cultural consumption of symbolic sign and commodity. Thus, Thainess is, alongside Chineseness, Englishness and so forth, another choice among a variety of national and ethnic signifiers.

**Cosmopolitanism and Fundamentalism**

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism as an impending result of globalization. In some ways, the new global context recreates “sense of place and community” in very positive ways, giving rise to an energetic cosmopolitanism in certain localities; in others, local fragmentation may inspire a “nostalgic, introverted and parochial sense of local attachment and identity” (Morley and Robins 1995: 118). Cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with “the Other” (Hannerz 1996: 103). The cosmopolitan is someone who has a keen grasp of a globalized world as one, in which there are “many” and “no” others at the same time (Tomlinson 1999: 194). The two parts should not be seen as antagonistic, but as “mutually tempering and thus disposing us
towards an ongoing dialogue both within ourselves and within distanciated cultural others” (ibid.: 195). Thus, the cosmopolitan must be aware of the legitimate pluralism of cultures, and possess an openness to cultural difference. They are those who have the ability to coexist comfortably with cultural diversity or even to actively seek immersion in other cultures, making themselves feel at home wherever they happen to be located. In so doing, as Paul Kennedy (2001: 19) suggests, they can, not only construct locality by “activating communication technologies and the media but also by utilizing global social networks tied primarily to family and ethnic affiliations.” As a result, “community” has become independent of specific locations. Moreover, John Tomlinson (1999) urges cosmopolitans to act as “ethical glocalists,” who embrace a sense of distant others as symbolically “significant others.” In this way, worldwide mutual benefits can be possibly hoped for.

On the other side, those who feel threatened as a result of global-local tensions are “fundamentalists” who, according to Giddens (1999: 48-9),

call for a return to basic scriptures or texts, supposed to be read in a literal manner, and they propose that the doctrines derived from such a reading be applied to social, economic or political life. Fundamentalism gives new vitality and importance to the guardians of tradition. Only they have access to the “exact meaning” of the texts... Fundamentalism, therefore, has nothing to do with the context of beliefs, religious or otherwise. What matters is how the truth of beliefs is defended or asserted.

Hence, there is an argument that the world is splitting up into smaller units and ethnic identities. Other trends in the media such as cheap videotape cameras, underground news agencies and newspapers, and the increasing ease of media piracy, will encourage localism, separatism, talking back to, and switching off from authority, the center, the national and foreign media (Tunstall 1977: 273-4). Elsewhere, Benedict Anderson (1992: 13) talks about the long-distance nationalist - Irish in America, Ukranians in Toronto, Tamils in Melbourn, Jamaicans in London, Croats in Sydney, Jews in New York, Vietnamese in Los
Angeles, and Turks in Berlin – “who find it tempting to play identity politics by participating in the conflicts of their imagined Heimat - now only fax-time away.”

Whether short or long distance nationalism, globalization makes it possible for both to be reimagined and reconstructed. Communications media provide a way to sustain cultural continuity despite spatial dislocation, “a way of renewing and maintaining tradition in new and diverse contexts through the appropriation of mediated symbolic forms” (Thompson 1995: 203). Thus, “those we consider as Other or alien - the ‘new barbarians’ - will be increasingly in our midst” (Morley and Robins 1995: 25). The downside of an increased familiarity with the Other, be it in face-to-face relations or through images or the representation of the other’s world-view or ideology, is that it may lead to a “disturbing sense of engulfment and immersion” (Featherstone 1995: 91). Stuart Hall (1992: 293-311) provides examples ranging from nationalism in Eastern Europe and the rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East where “purified” identities are being constructed and “closure” tradition being restored, to the revival of little-Englandism in England where Shakespeare’s sceptered isle is constantly produced and reproduced. The fundamentalist worldview has at its core “agency and action; the two key components of this are the belief that fundamentalists are ‘chosen’ by God, and that there is a clear threat to the foundations of their worldview” (Scott 2001: 82). Consequently, these two elements mobilize fundamentalist communities against specific targets for specific reasons: they always know who they are fighting against and for what they are fighting. This struggle is given divine agency through their belief in being “chosen”: theirs is always a holy war.

Indeed, both cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism can be said to be “the children” of globalization: one is tolerant and open to dialogue, while the other is the opposite. Cosmopolitanism allows for the “expansion of many individual horizons of hope and fantasy, and the growth of a wide range of progressive transnational alliances;” while fundamentalism may result in unfortunate “riots, refugee-flows, and
both state and nonstate-supported torture and ethnocide” (Appadurai 1990: 307-8). It has been suggested that contemporary Islamic movements are “products of economic, political, and cultural globalization, not simply local reactions,” and that new identities and movements arise, not just in response to, but “on the basis of the new scale of social organization and cultural transmission” (Calhoun 1997: 92-3). As Calhoun comments on the message of Ayatollah Khomeini which spread widely through the world by tape recordings and found receptive audiences in South Asian Muslim enclaves in Britain as well as in Islamic countries from Sudan to Pakistan:

It addressed Muslims as individuals wherever they might be, and as members of the great community of Islamic faith, but not primarily as members of intermediate ethnicities or local polities. The ideology of Islamic fundamentalism is not liberal but in many variants it is universalizing. It is an international, indeed global, way of conceptualizing the local.

As globalization continues, communities around the world will react to it and endeavor to develop strategies of either negotiation or resistance. In the case of rejection, as Julie Scott (2000: 95) foresees, fundamentalism is here to stay and “will continue to be a potential resource for such resistance.” Since globalization begins to be felt more strongly, fundamentalism is likely to manifest itself in a shift toward even more radical and militant measures, as Scott also shows in the case of American Protestant fundamentalists in the rural America’s mid-west. On another occasion, terrorism has tragically resulted in the Twin Towers tragedy in New York City on 11 September 2001. That can also be said to be a product of globalization, in the ways in which terrorist act were planned, organized and coordinated. Its enormous impact was felt worldwide, showing how much the world has become truly globalized today. It is therefore clear which of the children of globalization – one, tolerant, open and constructive/the other, impatient, close and destructive - is more desirable, in order for the world to be a better place.
Conclusion

Contrary to the general belief that the process of globalization entails the homogenizing effect, either in the sense of Americanization or economic commoditization, the outcome looks convincingly to be a set of unpredictable cultural flows rather than the simple worldwide expansion of Western modernity. Globalization is therefore not a domination of the global over the local. It does not, and will not, eliminate the localized character of accommodation, but rather creates a new kind of symbolic affiliation with the contemporary world. More important, it is the choosing between cosmopolitanism or fundamentalism, which is indeed vital to the well being of the world and the global future.
References


Vietnam: Society, Economics, Security, Politics and Foreign Affairs

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reviewed by Sud Chonchirdsin

This book, which first appeared as a research work, is an attempt to build the body of knowledge of Vietnamese studies among Thai academia and the public. Since Vietnamese studies have only recently caught attention of Thai scholars, it is not surprising to find that there are few books on this area written by local scholars. As a result, this book serves very well as a basic reference for those who are interested in Vietnamese studies, since it is a remarkable compilation of information about contemporary Vietnam.

The book comprises eight chapters dealing with general knowledge of contemporary Vietnam in different aspects, however, the author places strong emphasis on Vietnam's foreign affairs (chapter 8), which is his area of specialization. The chapter provides readers with an excellent background to Vietnam's foreign policy with its neighbouring countries in mainland South East Asia, especially with Thailand, Laos and Cambodia in the 1980s, the United States of America, China and the former Soviet Union and Russia during and after the second Vietnam or Indo-China war. Articulate arguments have been propounded and related questions have been satisfactorily answered.

The chapters that deal with Vietnamese economy, security and the Vietnamese Communist Party system have been clearly presented
with well-researched data collected both from Vietnamese and other foreign sources. The tables and figures which appear in these chapters are very useful. At the beginning of each chapter, thought-provoking questions are raised in order to stimulate the reader’s thoughts and to encourage him to attempt to find answers by further reading the chapter. However, it is quite frustrating for those who have a limited background knowledge about Vietnam to find easily the answers when the author himself stops short of answering fully the questions he has posed. On the contrary, he prefers to raise further questions as the chapter progresses. Furthermore, the significant number of incomprehensible or unpolished phrases (from his research draft?) and complicated writing style make it more difficult for readers to understand the message which the author intends to communicate. An example can be found on page 212, where the author discusses a cabinet reshuffle in relation to economic difficulties in the 1980s.

Out of the eight chapters, chapter three, dealing with Vietnamese history, is probably the least well presented. It might be the author’s intention to keep this chapter concise and to provide readers with only a general knowledge of Vietnamese history, but accuracy and articulate discussion should not be compromised if the purpose of this book is going to be well served. It would have been advisable for the author to have consulted a wider range of Vietnamese historiography, both by Vietnamese and western scholars, before he drew his conclusions about historical incidents. A consequence of this rather limited historiography is that there are a significant number of misinterpretations and questionable conclusions. One example is the author’s claim that Emperor Tu Du’c was not aware of the volatile situation in China when he sought Chinese assistance to protect Vietnam from French colonialism (page 25); this is not correct. A.B. Woodside, in his work on Vietnam and the Chinese Model (Woodside 1988), explains in full detail how well informed the Emperor was as far
as the situation in China in the second half of the nineteenth century was concerned. A second example is his assessment of the scale of the success of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Viet Minh before and immediately after the declaration of independence by Ho Chi Minh on 2 September 1945. This has been thoroughly re-evaluated by David Marr in his book *Vietnam 1945. The Quest for Power* (Marr 1995) in which he concludes that the success of the party in rallying popular support for the fight for independence was limited and partial, however, it would seem the Khien has relied on Vietnamese historiography, which normally characterises that party’s success in the fight for independence in Vietnam as indisputable and overwhelming. These two examples are only a few among many questionable interpretations and conclusions in this chapter.

In conclusion, despite some significant drawbacks, *Vietnam: Society, Economics, Security, Politics and Foreign Affairs* by Khien Theeravit will certainly be a welcome and valuable addition to the body of Thai literature on Vietnamese studies and be much appreciated by scholars and the public alike. It provides valuable information about contemporary Vietnam, which is quite hard to find in Thai academia. This book will certainly become a remarkable source of reference and is well worthy of reading.