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Research Notes

Globalisation to Glocalisation: A Conceptual Exploration

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Abstract: The socio-cultural changes in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Singapore, can be beneficially examined in terms of the concepts of globalisation and glocalisation. The two concepts are related and their evolution and transformation highlight the tangled relationship between the discipline of sociology and globalisation. Although the sociological concepts and theories in the Western sociological discourses have a general import, there are problems in the application of these in the local contexts of Malaysia and Singapore. This calls for a critical and creative refinement of the concepts.

Using the examples of contemporary Indonesian music, *dangdut,* developed by Rhoma Irama and the invented traditions of Bali that include various art forms informed by various western artists over a long period of time, Yamashita argues that "the history of Southeast Asia itself can be a good example of glocalisation."[1] It is important to turn to history to understand the process of glocalisation to evaluate the role of agency of the nation-state as well as local cultural traditions in determining the dimensions and directions of the glocalisation process. However, it is necessary, as a backdrop, to discuss globalisation and glocalisation in conceptual and operational terms.

Conceptual Issues

Sociological concepts are often contentious and more so if the concepts are in public domain, as are concepts like "development,"

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"modernisation" or "globalisation" and are highly ideologically charged. In everyday discussion, globalisation is often used to refer to the economic integration that is apparently taking place in the world through the increasing flow of capital and trade. The economic definition of globalisation has become dominant since both the proponents and the opponents of globalisation tend to subscribe to the economic definition. The proponents of economic globalisation, the assorted neo-liberals, extol the benefits of globalisation. Indeed their emphasis is on the economic facet of the concept. Both the critics and opponents of globalisation whether on the streets of Seattle in 1999 or the academics, for example, Joseph Stiglitz tend to view globalisation as an economic beast. What is the sociological understanding of the phenomenon of globalisation?

In social science it is often difficult, if not impossible, to trace the origin of concepts. It is difficult to identify who used the term "globalisation" for the first time. According to Malcolm Waters, Roland Robertson was one of the early users of the term.[2] Even in the 1980s, when Robertson was explicating the concept of globalisation, his stance was to emphasise the cultural dimension of globalisation contra writers like Immanuel Wallerstein whose writings, at that point, were heavily biased towards economic determinism. Roland Robertson was a well-regarded sociologist of religion who wanted to view globalisation as taking place both at the level of human consciousness as well as in terms of cultural connectivity and complexity.

No matter who coined it first, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, globalisation as a concept and slogan is used more frequently than any other terms. In Singapore, from the inflow of foreign capital and technology to movies and popular culture, almost everything has resonance with globalisation. Globalisation is a heroic process or a sinister process, depending on which side of the debate one stands. Jan Aart Scholte argues that globalisation may lead to social violence but it also provides emancipatory potential.[3] The outcome depends on what the historical actors make of it.

Sociology and Globalisation

Globalisation as a concept in social science has a short history. *The Collins Dictionary of Sociology* has an entry on "globalization of

production" but no entry on globalisation as such.[4] *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology* has an entry on globalisation together with globalisation theory.[5] The entry refers to the book edited by Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King which carried globalisation in its title.[6] However, scholars discussed the subject of globalisation in the 1980s and even earlier.[7] One could argue that Karl Marx and before him Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) produced texts that dealt with the subject of globalisation. Globalisation as a social process is old and has a much longer history. Many writers have traced the early globalising processes in the dissemination of religion and culture, interactions of people, groups, communities through trade and commerce from the ancient times.

Globalisation, though it means many things to many people, is one of the master processes of contemporary period. Globalisation as a field in sociology is a legatee of the macro-sociological interests and development. Globalisation study addresses itself to the connectivity of broad processes of technological, economic, political, cultural interrelationships. Whether one looks at the economic, cultural or media connectivity worldwide, one has to take a much broader understanding of society and social institutions. Sociologists such as Barrington Moore, Immanuel Wallerstein, Charles Tilly and Theda Skocpol have looked at society in the broadest sense of the term, in that the inspiration came from Marx, Weber and later Braudel and other social historians.[8] Sociology focuses its analytical lenses on the flows and processes in society whether at the local, national or global levels. In other words, sociology has a genuine claim over the field of globalisation.

Some contemporary writers accuse sociology, an archetypical social science, as a prisoner of nation-state. Anthony Giddens and Immanuel Wallertsien have both complained that sociology has been the study of modern nation states. The definitions as well as the boundaries of society, which sociology seeks to study, often overlap with those of nation-state. Since the interest taken by sociologists such as Roland Robertson and others since the late 1970s, sociology has redefined its scope and field as the social *scientific* study of the global processes. Ulrich Beck has explicitly called for the development of new concepts to capture the new realities of interconnectedness, plurality, multi-locality and multiplicity.[9]

Sociology has established its claim over globalisation as a field of study historically. A return to national society-centred focus would be a major regressive step towards objectivist, scientistic sociology and a return to what C Wright Mills called "abstracted empiricism."[10] Or worse, sociology might become a residual discipline busy picking up areas left unattended by other social sciences. Sociology is not the only branch of social science that has a claim to study society because other branches of social science do study aspects of society. For example, institutional economists deal with social structure and cultural values to explain economic processes and market behaviours. Political scientists such as Robert Putnam have done important sociological studies of political processes.[11] Such fields as political sociology illustrate the cross over of political science and sociology all the time. Social sciences are tasked to analyse society in all its various aspects and constellations.

The long standing relationship between sociology and globalisation, gives sociology as a discipline a unique position to study all aspects of the field of globalisation, a master process in human society. This does not preclude the claims of other disciplines to the subject of globalisation and to the importance of each field's autonomy to venture out and explore using its own traditions and conceptual frames. While globalisation as a framework is naturally biased in favour of macro-sociological issues, questions were raised to the viability of using this framework to study social realities on the ground. This led to a rethinking of macro-micro relationship. Glocalisation as a concept arose to help alleviate the conceptual difficulties of macro-micro relationship.

Evolution of the Term "Glocalisation"

According to the dictionary, the term "glocal" and the process noun "glocalisation" are "formed by telescoping global and local to make a blend."[12] The term was modeled on the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which originally meant adapting farming technique to one's own local condition. In the business world the idea was adopted to refer to global localisation. The word as well as the idea came from Japan.[13]

Though the term "glocalisation" has a Japanese origin, its English usage can be attributed to Professor Roland Robertson, a British/

American sociologist.[14] His interest in Japanese society led him to find out that the term "glocalisation," used by Japanese marketing experts, meant that products of Japanese origin should be localised – that is, they should be suited to local taste and interests – yet, the products are global in application and reach. Robertson and other sociologists interested in the subject of global processes could not help noticing that many of the social categories and practices assume a local flavour or character despite the fact that these products were invented elsewhere. Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse has for some time used terms such as *mélange*, *hybridity*, and *syncretism* to capture similar processes with regard to culture.

According to Nederveen Pieterse, there are three views on the issue of globalisation of cultures.[15] The first view is the clash of cultures view expressed in terms of clash of civilisations by writers like Samuel Huntington. The second notion is best expressed in the phrase of "McDonaldisation" of the world.[16] This view obviously suggests a homogenised world, a world dominated by a single culture that erases differences of local cultures. The third view is that of hybridisation or synthesis. Much of the evolution of human culture can be seen as exchanges, diffusion, etc. where cross-breeding, borrowing and adjusting to the local needs and so on are very common. It should be stressed that although glocalisation belongs to the same genre or has resonance with these categories, there are some important differences as well.

According to Wordspy, glocalisation means "the creation of products or services intended for the global market, but customised to suit the local cultures."[17] Although the term glocalisation has come to frequent use since the late 1980s, there were several related terms that social scientists used and continue to use. One such related word, which has been in use in social sciences and related fields for quite some time is, indigenisation.

Some social scientists claimed that social sciences such as sociology and political science, even psychology were products of Western social experiences, therefore, when these fields of inquiry were transported and transplanted to non-European or non-western contexts such as Latin America, Asia and Africa, there was a need for indigenisation of these subjects. The idea of indigenisation has created quite a controversy among social scientists because it raises

fundamental questions about the applicability of social scientific ideas and concepts. However, indigenisation can be seen as similar to localisation. In both these concepts, there is an assumption of an original or authentic "locality" or "indigenous system." One of the consequences of globalisation is that it opens up doubts about the originality and authenticity of cultures. If one takes a long-term view of globalisation, "locality" or "local" itself is a consequence of globalisation. There are hardly any sites or cultures that can be seen as isolated or unconnected from the global processes.

Robertson, one of the pioneers in the study of globalisation, viewed globalisation neither as a recent phenomenon nor as a consequence of modernisation. The theories of modernisation came under serious attack in sociology because of such assumptions, as unilinearity and convergence. As people's knowledge of the world increased, many writers pointed out that the cultural differences are not all that superficial and nonlinearity and mutiliniearity are better descriptions of global modernity. Convergence, rather than divergence, seems to have been the consequence of modernisation. Yet, the divergent cultures and societies can be studied with the help of a globalised social science and there was no need for a diverse, indigenised social science. For social science to claim scientific status, it could not afford to forfeit its claim to universality and universal knowledge. Social science must be context sensitive but not context dependent.

It is in this context that Robertson conceptualised globalisation in the twentieth century as "the interpenetration of the universalization of particularization and the particularization of universalism."[18] Khondker, building on Robertson's framework, argued that globalisation or glocalisation should be seen as an interdependent process.[19] The problem of simultaneous globalisation of the local and the localisation of globality can be expressed as the twin processes of macro-localisation and micro-globalisation. Macro-localisation involves expanding the boundaries locality as well as making some local ideas, practices, and institutions global. The rise of worldwide religious or ethnic revivalist movements can be seen as examples of macro-localisation.

Micro-globalisation involves incorporating certain global processes into the local setting. Thus, for instance, social movements such as the feminist movements and ecological movements or new

production techniques and marketing strategies which emerge in a certain local context but over a period of time these practices spread far beyond that locality into a larger spatial and historical arena. Likewise, the print industry or computer industry with a specific location of its emergence has now become a global phenomena. Overcoming space is globalisation. In this view, globalisation is glocalisation. This view is somewhat different from the way Giddens conceptualises the relationship between the global and the local. Globalisation, for Giddens, "is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world."[20] While in this view local is the provider of the response to the forces that are global, it can be argued that local itself is constituted globally. Ritzer in discussing glocalisation has added another – perhaps redundant – convoluted term "grobalisation" to refer to what he calls "growth imperatives [pushing] organizations and nations to expand globally and to impose themselves on the local."[21] For Ritzer, globalisation is the sum total of glocalisation and "grobalisation".

Wong argues that a global company does not mean that it has gone global all the way.[22] There are companies that are part global, part regional or part local involving different domains such as portfolio, supply chain, research and development and business processes. In terms of mode of business practices, there could be independent operations, joint venture or alliances.

Key Propositions

The main propositions of glocalisation are not too different from the main arguments of a sophisticated version of globalisation. These are:

1. Diversity is the essence of social life;
2. Globalisation does not erase all differences;
3. Autonomy of history and culture gives a sense of uniqueness to the experiences of groups of people whether we define them as cultures, societies or nations;
4. Glocalisation is the notion that removes the fear from many that globalisation is like a tidal wave erasing all the differences. A number of books and articles on the subject of globalisation have given the impression that it is a force that creates a uniform world,

a world where barriers disappear and cultures become amalgamated into a global whole. The tensions and conflicts between cultures are nothing but the problems of a transitory phase. Ironically, the phase of transition has been around for a long time. Despite entering the third millennia, many of the age-old problems of differences of cultures and religions remain.

5. Glocalisaton does not promise a world free from conflicts and tensions but a more historically grounded understanding of the complicated, yet pragmatic view of the world.

Globalisation is Not Necessarily Westernisation

Some writers, especially journalists, view globalisation as the worldwide spread of "Westernisation." This view is either erroneous or contains only partial truth. From one perspective, various processes outwardly seem that the world is, indeed, becoming westernised. Thus, the popularity of the Western music, movies, and "McDonalds" as examples of Westernisation. More and more countries are seeing the opening of McDonalds.

According to Ritzer, McDonaldisation "do[es] not represent something new but, rather, the culmination of a series of rationalization processes that had been occurring throughout the twentieth century."[23] Ritzer saw this as a continuation of Weber's rationalisation thesis and highlighted the following as the key features of rationalisation: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. The last of the features is also related to increasing use of technology in workplace which replaces human labour as well as enhances monitoring and effective control of workers. These features of McDonaldisation now have pervaded various other organisations in society and are not just confined to food outlets.

At one level one can see the emergence of a variety of fast food outlets using, in varying degrees, the principles of McDonalds; at another level one can see quick banking via ATM and other service providers using the same principles. At the level of popular culture, more and more countries are playing the top chart of the pop list of USA, and Hollywood movies and US-made television serials such as *Friends* and *The Simpsons* are becoming ubiquitous to the extent that some writers even use the term "Americanisation" to describe these processes of cultural transmission. However, a closer look will

reveal that these cultural goods have different meanings in different societal and cultural contexts with uneven impact on classes and age-groups. Some of the products are consumed without any modification, others are modified and indigenised to suit the local contexts and there are exceptional situations where the intentions are completely inverted.

In the past, many writers found it necessary to distinguish modernisation from Westernisation. Modernisation was believed to be a set of cultural practices and social institutional features that historically evolved in Europe and North America, commonly referred to as the West. The need to separate Westernisation from modernisation (in the past) was motivated more by nationalism than pure intellectual reasons, because historically speaking, most of the modern cultural traits began in the West, a historical fact which was difficult to accommodate in a nationalistic political culture. The Western scholars in the nineteenth century were also guilty of making exaggerated claims of Western superiority. Max Weber, a German sociologist, was correct to claim that the western rationality and science had become universal but his denigration of non-western cultures did not sit well among the larger intellectual community. Many Indian sociologists took pains to delineate the differences between modernisation and Westernisation.

Similar discussions exist with regard to the so-called Westernisation of the Ottoman Empire, modernisation of Japan since the Meiji restoration of 1868 or modernisation of China in the early part of the twentieth century such as the May 4th Movement of 1919. In the modernisation process, many of the late modernising societies were borrowing ideas and knowledge and technology most of which were generated in the early modernised societies in Europe. The geography of the West kept shifting. In the nineteenth century, when Germany was modernising, the idea of the West was limited to Western Europe only (mainly Britain and France). In some post-colonial situations the demarcation was based more on political expedience than logical or intellectual merits. Good Westernisation came to be regarded as modernisation and bad modernisation was designated as Westernisation. The distancing from Westernisation can also be understood as a reaction to centuries of domination and exploitation of the colonies by the Western (mainly European) powers. However,

over time a more objective consideration of history indicates that many of the traits that spread worldwide originated in certain geographical regions, yet as these traits were transplanted elsewhere, they became mutated and assumed different forms in different contexts. For example, parliamentary democracy evolved in England, with roots that go back to the Magna Carta of 1215. However, as Westminster-style parliamentary democracy was institutionalised in India, Malaysia, and other former British colonies, they mutated in light of the local milieu.

Westernisation as a term is not equivalent to globalisation. Nevertheless, Westernisation can be seen as an aspect of globalisation. Certain institutional features and cultural traits that originated in the West were put in place in many other geographical regions. Over time, these institutions and practices mutated and assumed new meanings. Therefore, Westernisation can be seen as the beginning of a process. The cultural features borrowed or imitated themselves mutate in the source countries. Thus, Westernisation as a category has limited conceptual value. One can associate certain literary forms, genres, and traits as part of the cultural zone vaguely called "the West," yet these are mere influences as can be seen in artistic, literary, and architectural styles. For example, the great Indian film maker late Satyajit Ray was influenced by Hollywood films and the art of film making, but he did not replicate Hollywood movies in Calcutta. His movies were modern capturing local themes which he projected with a modern art form and technology. Hence, it was truly global, or more appropriately, glocal.

Presently, Singapore is establishing linkages with both Bollywood and Indian film industries as well seeking to play the role of an outsourced location for hi-tech Hollywood productions. Globalisation, like modernisation, is often a fusion. Westernisation as a concept has some value if used only as a descriptive rather than analytic category. As an analytic category it is rather limited.

Writers like John Meyer have used the idea of isomorphism (a term borrowed from science, botany, in particular) which means replication of the same form yet separated from the main source.[24] His research has shown that modern education – not Western education though it was perhaps modified and institutionalised in the West – has spread worldwide, and a similar set of values and

practices have emerged in diverse settings. For example, college graduates command more social prestige and respect regardless of cultural contexts. Some cultures can give more rewards than others. Globalisation shows tendencies towards isomorphism, yet some people may continue to mistake this process for Westernisation.

In the context of Singapore, the first generation leaders always emphasized the fact that although Singapore's economic development was dependent on Western technology and capital, and it was reliant on multinational corporations to foster economic growth, the state maintained a certain degree of autonomy and formulated broad social development strategy. Likewise, Malaysian leaders emphasized the importance of Western technology but not at the cost of indigenous culture and values.

Glocalisation and Hybridisation

In the discussion of glocalisation, some writers tend to conflate it with hybridisation. This may be somewhat misleading. Glocalisation involves blending, mixing adapting of two or more processes one of which must be local. But one can accept a hybrid version that does not involve local elements. In the context of higher education in Singapore, a hybridised version comprising the original British model and the US model was accepted. One could find many such examples in matters of technology and business practices where two different systems or modes are combined for better results. Glocalisation to be meaningful must include at least one component that addresses the local culture, system of values and practices and so on. One of the areas in Singapore and Malaysia where the evidence of glocalisation is quite visible is mass communication and especially in the area of television programming. From televised drama, sitcoms, and even "reality shows," one finds attempts of glocalisation. Although some attempts are not always successful and there are instances when one can see unabashed imitation, by and large the idea of glocalisation and fusion remains appealing to many Singaporeans.

Glocalisation as Fusion

Following Robertson's notions of emulation and reference society as important features of globalisation, it can be argued that

glocalisation involves fusion of ideas and not blind imitation. Robertson pointed out that Japan's strategy of socio-economic development since the Meiji restoration has been a careful and strategic emulation of ideas and technologies from outside. In his opinion, the motivation that led the Japanese elite to make Japan an international, or a global society, remains to be explored.[25]

In contemporary development discourse, the idea of best practices has attained a certain stature. From raising productivity in the traditional manufacturing to high-end research and development centers, the idea of best practices has gained ground. Careful emulation today, as in the past, involves fusion. Blind grafting of ideas or policies in total disregard of contexts would not result in success. In the case of Singapore and Malaysia, it can be stated that careful fusion of ideas and the never-ending search for best practices have produced good results.

Singapore and Malaysia: Technology and Glocalisation

Singapore, located in Southeast Asia, has attained the developed country status or High Income Economy according to the World Bank classification. Having experienced a rapid state-led economic development under a favourable global economic climate, Singapore has been pursuing the goal of creating a knowledge-based economy since the 1990s. Singapore's economic growth since her emergence in 1965 as an independent state entailed heavy investment in education and development of human resource in science and technology.

Singapore's advancement in areas of knowledge and high technology is dependent to a large extent on international collaboration. Two aspects of Singapore's growth are striking: linkage with the global market and a highly rational approach to governance which is often evidenced by a near absence of corruption. These two aspects have direct bearing on the issues of technological developments in Singapore. An additional factor is the cultural diversity of Singapore's population. Singapore is both a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, which provides an added dimension to the context of formulation of ethical standards. Its 4 million people (in 2004) comprise 76% Chinese, 14% Malay, 7% Indian and 3% others. As many as one quarter of Singapore's population is non-

citizens which indicate Singapore's reliance on foreign human resources both at working class jobs as well as high end knowledge workers. A multicultural population and the varying sensitivity of various groups have influenced policies concerning biotechnology.

According to Stephen Haggard, "Singapore had already broken away from the typical policy pattern of a developing country as early as 1970. By the 1980s Singaporean policymakers were identifying the country with small European economies such as Switzerland."[26] It has been noted by a number of writers such as Gary Rodan, Robert Wade, and Stephen Haggard, among others that Singapore's economic development and social modernisation did not take place following a pure free market model.[27] The Singapore state was very much involved in guiding the market forces. On the one hand, Singapore has relied heavily on multinational corporations to launch its economic growth, it has also built a high rate of savings through a central Provident Fund. Singapore's development model showed a certain mixed or hybrid quality.

Soon after Singapore's independence in 1965, policymakers began to focus attention on development in sciences and technology. The strive for such development was aided in the process by a close relationship with the multinational corporations who brought investments and employed technically qualified Singaporeans. Right from the early days of national development, Singapore was well integrated with not only the international economic system, but also with global knowledge systems. Singapore's export-oriented economic development in the 1980s was dominated by IT and computer peripherals. In the 1990s emphasis on biotechnology followed an earlier emphasis on IT.

Singapore's development since her independence can be described as a transformation from a Third World to a First World economy. Much of that development can be attributed to Singapore's adoption of modern technology. Choices of technology were not always preceded by controversies and debates. Both the government and the general public showed a great deal of pragmatism in the choice of technology. Although, in most instances, technology was adopted without much modifications, on the mode of use, and so on, there were imprints of adaptation and glocalisation. One such area is the electronic road pricing system. The technology of monitoring cars

from a scanner fitted in a gantry was not a Singaporean invention, but the way that technology was used was very Singaporean. Because of the drive to catch up, Singapore has always been ahead in adopting new technology.

In recent years, having achieved the developed status, some Singaporeans are showing concern with issues of privacy and so on because some of the new technology is intrusive. Singapore's love affair with technology is evident in the fact that Singapore ranks among the top three countries in the world in terms of the usage of personal computers as well as hand phones. The only country ahead of Singapore in the number of Short Messaging Service (SMS) is Hong Kong.

Whenever a new technology is invented, Singapore would be one of the first places where that technology would show up. Singaporeans have a favourable attitude towards technology. Singapore International Airlines (SIA) as well as the Port Authority of Singapore (PSA) remains equipped with the state of the art technology. ATM machines in Singapore were introduced in the early 1980s. Singapore's public transport system is another place where one would find a great many applications of new technology. However, all cases of adaptation technology may not be seen as examples of glocalization. In many instances, for example, computer technology in Singapore was implemented without any modifications. However, as Singapore entered a new phase of research in the 1990s, namely, in the area of biotechnology, one finds evidence of glocalisation. Biotechnological research calls for a careful consideration of and orientation towards local cultural and ethical contexts. A good deal of attention has been given to these areas in Singapore.

Another example of Singapore's glocalisation is found in the area of architectural designs. In the post-socialist world, Singapore remains a unique society where 90% of the population lives in the houses built by the government and then sold to its citizens. When Singapore embarked on a massive public housing programme, it borrowed the so-called international style of very basic and practical designs, yet a new concept of public space–though limited to the residents of the housing blocs–evolved. These spaces known as void-decks were places for weddings, funerals or any such communal

gatherings. New designs blending the western and local motifs emerged in Singapore. Although the initial architectural thrust of Singapore can be viewed as "brutalism" driven by a sheer pragmatic consideration, over the years more attention has been given to the notions of fusion and hybridity, or in other words glocalisation.

Like Singapore, Malaysia has also developed quite rapidly. Singapore's transformation, however, can be described as moving from globalisation to glocalisation, while the Malaysian development can be better described as "glocalisation." An analysis of the political debates and discussions in Malaysia and Singapore and their economic strategies in the 1980s and 1990s, the last two decades of the twentieth century, shows that though the two countries pursued broadly similar export-led growth strategies, they had sharply different positions with regard to globalisation, or more specifically, economic globalisation.

It can be said that Singapore from the early stage of its post-independence economic development pursued a pro-globalisation strategy inviting multinational corporations to take the driving seat of its economic growth engine; Malaysia was somewhat hesitant and slow to adopt a similar MNC-led growth strategy. The differences with regard to economic and financial globalisation between these two Southeast Asian countries became manifest during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98. However, both Singapore and Malaysian economies are highly globalised in terms of the conventional indicator of foreign trade outstripping the gross domestic product by a huge margin.

An analysis of political rhetoric of the formative leaders of these two countries, however, shows differences in their responses towards globalisation. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding leader, had no problem with Westernisation provided the West accepted his arguments that certain Western political values such as individualism, political liberalism, and contentious democracy were not suitable for Singapore. Mr. Lee also had no problem as such with the West's political or economic dominance. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, though favouring a globalised economy, was more critical of the West's political dominance of the Third World. Neither leader recommended economic nationalism but were vocal about political and cultural nationalisms.

In a speech delivered at the Malaysian Institute of Management, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stated that globalisation, as interpreted by the developed countries, means:

> ... the break-down of boundaries as barriers to economic exploitation. Every country, rich or poor, developed or developing, would have access to every other country. This sounds absolutely fair. The playing field will be level, not tilted to favour anyone. It will be a borderless world. It will be just one world... The newly independent nations will disappear together with the old nations, including of course the former imperial or colonial powers. Everyone would be equal, citizens of the globe. But will they be truly equal?[28]

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's analysis of the impact of globalisation on developing countries is shared by a large number of scholars, political leaders and members of the public around the world. In the words of David Harvey: "One of the few good things to emerge from the last couple of years of political nightmares is that the seemingly neutral mask of 'globalization' has been torn off to reveal the raw imperialism beneath."[29]

Richard Falk in analyzing the twenty-first century world order outlines five possible approaches of globalisation:

1. corporate globalisation;
2. civic globalisation;
3. imperial globalisation;
4. apocalyptic globalisation; and
5. regional globalisation.

On imperial globalisation, Falk viewed: "Even at the high point of corporate globalization in the mid-1990s, there were a variety of assessments that pierced the economistic veil to discern an American project of global domination."[30] Very few would view globalisation as an unmixed blessing. However, it is important to note that Malaysia was not contemplating a policy of economic autarky. The issue of globalisation, or more specifically, glocalisation in Malaysia in particular and Southeast Asia in general has to be viewed more as an historical process.

Conclusion

Singapore's development experience which was underpinned by appropriate science and technology policies provides a convincing example of the effectiveness of glocalisation as a conscious development strategy. Although the strategy was not always perfect and there were lapses from time to time, Singapore, on the whole, has shown that cultural fusion can be an asset if properly harnessed for the objective of attaining socioeconomic growth without creating gross inequality and social dislocation.

The sociological concepts of globalisation in general and glocalisation in particular can be of great value in understanding the dynamic social transformation in Southeast Asia, especially in Singapore and Malaysia. It is always possible to be carried away with "methodological nationalism," a position that says each country or society should be examined in light of its own context through the devices of its own home-grown methodology. Such a position would lead to intellectual closure foreclosing dialogue and understanding between societies. In the globalised world such discourses have limited values. Yet, it is important to take the local contexts and variables and not to fall into the trap of blind imitation or aping of western ideas and concepts. However, in the end what is needed is a set of globally valid concepts that will help us examine processes of social transformation that is inextricably connected with global transformation. Also needed is a more careful, reflexive, and considered application of the concepts, not their abandonment.

Notes

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