



Global and International Studies: An Introduction

SECOND EDITION

John Synott

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Global and International Studies: An Introduction
2nd Edition
John Synott

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The rate of global social change has been such over the past four years that there was a real need to update the first edition of this book, titled *Global and International Studies: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*. Three areas in particular can be recognised as warranting revision to the original publication. First, the emergence of the environmental issue of climate change, with profound economic and social implications, has taken centre stage in future policy directions for Australia and all other countries. In some respects, the challenges of climate change are the first truly global ones that humanity has to address at a collective level, in the sense that all regions and peoples will be affected. Perhaps only nuclear war has the same potential for global impact. In respect to climate change, the efforts of Australia will not be sufficient unless they are part of policies and actions by other governments around the world. Yet, governments, institutions, business and community in Australia have to take early initiatives if the local impacts of climate change are to be mitigated. The local/globus nexus has never been more evident.

The second major area where revision has been required is in respect to the war in Iraq. At the time when the first version came out, the war in Iraq was barely underway and the rhetoric from governments of the 'coalition of the willing', including the Australian Government, was that the conflict would soon be over and the path to democracy was well underway in Iraq. Unfortunately, that rhetoric was unfounded and the conflict has drawn on, causing much loss of life and destruction in Iraq, as well as the deaths of foreign soldiers. More recently, there have been indications of foreign troop withdrawals and hopefully steps will be taken that lead to peace in Iraq.

The third major development has been the rise of China and India as substantial nation-state actors in the process of globalisation. At the time of the first edition, China was certainly in the forefront of global economic changes, but such has been the pace of growth in the intervening years that a revision of content was necessary. The rapid emergence of India as the new frontier of globalisation has consolidated a shift of seismic proportions in the world economy to Asia, with a wide range of further social and cultural implications.

This new edition attempts to take these developments into account. These events and their significance are consistent with the frameworks put forward in the first edition and its perspectives that only truly global framework and actions are appropriate and adequate to meet the huge challenges of our time and, also, to form suitable approaches to work, governance and civil life for Australians in every walk of life. These aspects have not changed and the book provides a comprehensive review of the globalisation process, its historical emergence, major paradigms that shape its formation, significant global actors and major global issues.

A major new section has been included in this book with additional chapters on a group of regions and nations. These cases include Australia and Australia's major trading partners – the United States, Japan, China and South Korea – plus chapters on India and sub-Saharan Africa. These cases provide a range of examples from both North and South of how selected nations or regions have developed historically and how they are responding to the pressures and challenges of contemporary change.

As well as a full chapter on Australia, this edition features contents specifically oriented for Australian students. These include Australian examples throughout the book, so that all chapters reinforce the

notion of Australia as a global nation. Moreover, the whole book is, in a sense, pitched as a dialogue with Australian students, framed within their political and cultural contexts. I adopted this approach because the vast majority of books on globalisation or international relations which Australian students read in their courses are of American origin and assume the readers are American. Such books do not 'talk' to Australian students, who always have to interpret the contents into local contexts. Australian students deserve better, because the issues of globalisation and contemporary social change go way beyond the purely academic, and are of real importance to the future of Australia and its people.

Also, with its orientation towards transdisciplinary perspectives, this book sets out to be somewhat more than just information. It is a call to awareness and engagement by students who will be the next generation of professionals and policy makers in Australia. They will hold considerable responsibility for the future of Australia as they contribute to the nation. The importance of coming years and decades has been pronounced by many and the challenges facing Australia have been publicised by government, mass media and other voices. The building of appropriate cognitive understandings, intellectual skills and conceptual tools is an important educational task that must be conducted now and be ongoing. It is hoped that this book, in its revised and expanded edition, will retain its appeal to students and academic staff and, through its discussions of global social change in the Australian context, contribute constructively to the future of individuals and the nation.

John Synott
Brisbane
2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While authorship and, thus, responsibility, for this book rests with me, many people have contributed in different ways to the first edition and to this second edition. The support from colleagues and students for my work in global studies has been the motivation to produce a new edition that has a strong Australian focus. The solid enrolments of students into my global studies classes over the years, bringing their critical engagements and enthusiastic discussions, have been an inspiration to update and review the material to which they have responded to so positively. In particular, their requests for content that recognises their identity as Australian students or international students in an Australian context have informed the orientation of this work, including the selection of case studies.

My appreciation is due to colleagues at my academic base in the Humanities Program at Queensland University of Technology, for helping to build global studies as a core area of our teaching and research. I welcomed the Professional Development Leave that provided the time necessary to complete the writing task. I wish to express my appreciation to the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Queensland, for welcoming me as a visiting scholar while I worked on the final stages of the book. Similarly, my gratitude to the Department of Education at Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, and in particular to my colleague Dr Claire McGlynn, who supported me generously at a critical stage in the process. I would also like to acknowledge the support from the world-wide network of scholars and educators in the International Peace Research Association which continues to provide me with a global framework of engagement, informed critique and transdisciplinary perspectives, as well as the incentive to produce scholarship that contributes towards a world culture of peace and a sustainable future. It is this vision of a better world for all that keeps me, and many others dedicated to our often complex and arduous tasks.

My thanks are due to Rene Popovsky for his efforts as my research assistant right through a hot summer vacation period, during which he researched, located and filed many important items of information, exemplars and cases that have enriched the work.

I offer deep appreciation for support in the writing of this book to Jeune Son, my partner in life, best friend and sharpest critic. If I have gone close to her standards of professional commitment and excellence in work results, the book will hold its own in the public domain. On top of that I am grateful for her love and encouragement that help to keep me in the right mental and emotional spaces to carry through the work. To my Patrick, Emily, Gretel and Julia, and all the family, I give thanks for enriching the present and inspiring strong hopes for success in the global future.

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To all of you, students alike, this book takes up the task identified by philosopher Bertrand Russell that 'without knowledge, the world of our hopes cannot be built'.

John Synott

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Part A



1

APPROACHES TO GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Introduction: a world of complex change

The arrival of the third millennium and 21st century cast into prominence social trends that were emerging in the closing decades of the previous century. While during the 1990s only people in the wealthier societies we call the 'North' and those pockets of privilege which exist in all cultures and societies on planet Earth were able to access the wonders of the technology revolution, the social impacts of new technologies and the revolutions in biology and nanotechnology (gene technology) are being felt more widely. At one level the current time is characterised by a proliferation – some say 'democratisation' – of technology, such that mobile phones and personal computers are now widely used around the world. At another level our lives are increasingly dominated by over-processed, franchised, mass-produced products that undermine the distinctiveness of place, culture and identity. Technology is re-shaping us, it often seems. A newspaper article announced that trends in nano-technology were towards the emergence of '*Homo technicus*, a creature with so many modifications and containing so many "smart" materials, it will no longer qualify as a *Homo Sapiens*' (Smith 2003, p. 25). What lies ahead?

People in all spaces on Earth are experiencing social changes of a kind unprecedented in human history. Australians are deeply immersed in these social changes. It is as if, turning the calendar into the new century, humankind has entered a dimension that is both strange and challenging, while packed with opportunities and dangers. Indeed, the contemporary world is characterised by complexity and change. New opportunities for wealth creation and exciting experiences seem to be there for the taking. China entered the space race in October 2003 by placing a man in space. In April 2002 private citizen and South African businessman Mark Shuttleworth spent a week on a Russian manned satellite, costing him £14 million, signalling the era of space holidays for the very wealthy. In early 2007 a second space tourist paid US\$30 million to the same operators to take a trip into space, and other super-rich individuals have signed up for space flights. Also, the possibility of replacing worn-out body parts with new ones grown from stem cells, thus prolonging the average life expectancy for those able to afford such treatment, is likely to become reality within the current generation. Smith suggested:

By harnessing the power of nanotechnology – the ability to assemble materials one molecule at a time – it will become possible in future for bioengineers not only to replace or repair every part of the human body. It will also unleash the temptation to enhance our abilities and senses.

(Smith 2003, p. 25)

This notion of selective enhancement has enormous implications for our human species, which has evolved within the limits set by nature, but now is pushing the boundaries of natural life cycles, mortality and human abilities.

At the same time as luxury reaches new heights, increasing numbers of people face intense uncertainties about basic survival and wellbeing, as a consequence of poverty, health crises, environmental degradation and disasters or from violent attacks. Social breakdown, terrorism and the threats of war are near for many people. It has been estimated by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (UN) that almost 850 million people go to bed hungry every night, while the number of people facing severe hunger is climbing at a rate of almost 5 million each year, reversing a trend from the first half of the 1990s (*The Australian* 2003). This trend is in spite of hunger reduction being at the top of the list of global priorities of the UN.

In Australia, while standards of living climb for many, the gaps between rich and poor have been exacerbated in recent times. Australia has a growing crop of billionaires, 14 according to the 2007 *Forbes* list (<www.forbes.com/lists>), with several more people on the verge of becoming billionaires. Meanwhile, those at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder are experiencing increased disadvantages in employment, social security and health. The poorest 10 per cent receive just 2 per cent of the national household income (CIA World Factbook – Australia 2007).

The international community has adopted the term 'globalisation' to define the complex changes in the current time. Part of these changes, as suggested previously, can be attributed to the profound effects of the technology revolution. That particular development has produced a radical alteration to our activities and consciousness of time and space. We can send an email message, access information on the Internet, transmit an image or converse by mobile telephones as quickly across the world as to elsewhere in the same building. The sheer speed with which information can be transmitted has radically altered the world's institutions and financial systems.

This speed is also transforming everyday behaviour of individuals. We can buy items directly from suppliers in other countries over the Internet, we can make hotel bookings or we can read on the web today's newspapers from far-away cities as easily as the people who buy that newspaper on the streets of those cities. The Internet marketplace, such as eBay, has become the first port of call for many shoppers, who can purchase goods and have them delivered across the world without having to leave home. In fact, our behaviours as members of an entrenched consumer culture are central issues in globalisation (Ritzer 2002), as are the resistance and objections to these trends by some social groups and cultures.

In another influence of new technology, air transport journeys that used to take days have been reduced to hours. It is just an overnight hop from Australia to Japan and many people make such journeys regularly, basically commuting to and from work across distant nations. Elsewhere, some people commute regularly across Europe, the United States (US) or both. In Australia, rapid air transport has produced a situation where increasing numbers of people work interstate from their homes and commute back on the weekends. For instance, the mining boom in Western Australia has resulted in employees travelling regularly by plane from homes on the east coast to work at the remote mine sites in the west. Of course, this behaviour brings impacts and stresses on family life as well as economic benefits. For instance, due to the boom in air travel in Australia, more international airlines have entered local markets to provide services.

In another respect, directly televised broadcasts of major events around the world such as the Olympics, concerts, even wars, take us immediately as local viewers to the place where the event is

occurring. We even have a term, ‘the CNN effect’, to describe the influence of news broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week on government policies, public opinion and social life.

Such events create a strong sense of a ‘global village’, a concept that is central to the approaches to globalisation in this book. The term was first introduced into contemporary discourse by sociologist Marshall McLuhan (1967), although its meaning has continued to unfold.

Terrorism and globalisation

This sense of a global village was brought home most strongly in the incident now known as 9/11. No one who saw the news at the time will forget the sense of collective horror when the hijacked jets slammed into the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001. That terrorist attack targeted one of the pre-eminent symbols of the globalising economy in the most prominent city in the US – a nation whose corporations are major driving forces of the global economy.

The incident and the reaction around the world epitomised recognition by many people of being members of a world community but on this occasion the consciousness of globality was associated with feelings of outrage, fear and insecurity by members of Western nations. Globalisation was suddenly experienced in privileged societies not just as Hollywood and McDonaldisation but as exposure and vulnerability. It was an event which shattered in several ways our connections to the century that had been left behind. Suddenly, the realities of conflict, violence and political struggle had jumped the boundaries. Such events previously had been understood to take place in locations of unresolved historical struggles – such as Northern Ireland, Bosnia or the Middle East. Shockingly, those beliefs were erased in a matter of minutes when the attack on New York took place and they will not return in our lifetimes (Crockett 2003).

The years since the World Trade Center incident have brought a series of crises and events that have deepened and probably entrenched the consciousness of global conflicts for most people. The impacts of successive terrorist attacks on innocent people in Bali (2002), Madrid (2004) and London (2005) have been compounded by the violent and tragic war in Iraq. In the Bali terrorist bomb attack on 12 October 2002, Australians on holiday were targeted in their pan-global identity as ‘Westerners’ and 88 lost their lives.

Just a month prior to the Bali bombing, as the first anniversary of 9/11 approached, feature journalist Paul Kelly (2002, p. 2) wrote in *The Australian* newspaper that ‘the world did change – America changed – on September 11 and there can be no return to what was.’ The Bali incident so soon after rammed this message home, as did the bombings in European capitals over the following years.

These incidents and the emergence of an enemy in the form of Al Qaeda Islamist terror networks created awareness of hostility, but the reaction was largely incomprehension rather than understanding of the economic, cultural and geo-political conditions around the world that led to such conflicts. Critics maintained that Americans did not broaden their perspectives after 9/11. Romei (2002, p. 13) reported that a survey by the Washington-based Pew Research Center concluded that only a ‘slightly larger’ number of Americans had increased their active interest in international affairs. In another example, *New York Times* journalist Thomas Friedman, famous for his widely distributed book on globalisation (2000), subsequently described his experience of TV viewers showing more interest in live baseball than the early stages of the Iraq invasion (Friedman 2003).

It would be unrealistic to expect a rapid change of an individual’s or national population’s cultural and sociopolitical consciousness, no matter how urgent the time, because such dispositions are the result of deeply formed historical ethnocentric behaviours. The process of nation building and history,