

Globalization, globalism and *Pax Globala* - the hardware, software and the heart-ware!

A Presentation to the 35th Episcopal Asiamerica Ministries Annual Consultation, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, June 6 – 10, 2008 by The Rev Chye Ann Soh

I am what they call a 'baby boomer', born not long after the end of the Second World War in 1954, which makes me 54 today. The world in which I was born into then was reeling from the wounds of war and ideological conflict. In fact, I was born a 'British subject' in an island called Singapore, 'founded' by a British explorer Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819 at the height of the British Imperial Colonial expansionism programmes, a.k.a. 'Globalization1.0'. (Globalisation, although a new term in our vocabulary, is not entirely a new concept. The prevailing power of globalisation and the implication for human relationships existed in various permutation and expressions throughout human history).

During the 1940's and 50's, in tandem with the wars that engulfed the whole world, a spate of nationalism and struggle for national self-identity and independence set in. Like pieces of dominoes, the Empires, British, Dutch, French, Spanish, and American alike, disintegrated and new nation States were established – for example, Indonesia (45), India (48) Malaysia (63), Singapore (65). Experts in globalization suggest that that ushered in 'Globalization 2.0'. Through a process of re-alignment and new protocols in international relations, new instruments and institutions for greater cooperation rather than competition were founded. These included the UN, WHO, IMF, and then WTO and the like.

I was too young to understand the meaning and implications of these changes and developments at that time. Of course I did not realise that I was born at a time when more or less, 'Globalisation 1.0' was coming to an end and 'Globalization 2.0' was about to begin...

In my lifetime, as will be the shared experience of many in this audience, the world has changed irrevocably and unbelievably! When Alvin Toffler wrote 'Future Shock' in 1970, which was a defining futurist's view of the world as it appeared then, he did not foresee many of the developments over the last 2 decades, beginning from the early 1980's. Although he did coin the term 'information overload', there was no way he could have included many of the terms we now can't live without – the world wide web, internet, HTML, email, google (now accepted as a verb as in 'googling'), eBay etc because these emerged only after 1980. How the world has changed, or undergone a massive paradigmatic shift over such a short period of time!

Future shock is also a term for a certain psychological state of individuals and entire societies, introduced by Toffler in his book of the same name. Toffler's shortest definition of future shock is a personal perception of "*too much change in too short a period of time*". But looking at how the world has remarkably adapted to these changes, Toffler could well have overestimated that sense of 'shock'! The future may be here but the shock perhaps is yet to come! That could well describe how many of us feel about the world we live in today in the first decade of the 21st century.

Using Toffler's prediction as a yardstick and timeline, 'Globalization 2.0' did not last long when it gave way to 'Globalization 3.0', to use Pulitzer Book prize Winner and well quoted author Thomas Friedman's terminology. His argument is that around the year 2000 we entered the era of Globalization 3.0. He further hypothesized that whereas Globalization 1.0 was about how governments drive change and Globalization 2.0 how companies (and business) were at the forefront of change, Globalization 3.0 has all to do with the new found power for individuals to collaborate and compete on a global scale as if we are all in one place at the same time. Virtuality has now become actuality!

GLOBALIZATION (hardware wiring a connected world)

How on earth could one begin to explain or describe globalization?

A Narrative? Snapshot? Glossary?

"Globalization can be defined as a set of economic, social, technological, political and cultural structures and processes arising from the changing character of the production, consumption, and trade of goods and assets that comprise the base of the international political economy." (**UNESCO**, see unesco.org/most/globalisation/Introduction.htm)

"...the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology." (**International Monetary Fund**, "Globalization, Opportunities and Challenges," in World Economic Outlook, May 1997)

"Globalization is the present worldwide drive toward a globalized economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments." (International Forum on Globalization, global coalition of anti-globalization NGOs, see <http://www.ifg.org/analysis.htm>)

"Cultures, economies, and politics appear to merge across the globe through the rapid exchange of information, ideas, and knowledge, and the investment strategies of global corporations." (David Held, in A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, and Politics, 6)

According to Wikipedia (which itself is a phenomenon of the globalization process where the individual possesses the power to influence, collaborate, create, serve, inform, educate, control, shape, define with disproportional leveraging involvement), globalization may be defined as:

The process of globalizing, transformation of some things or phenomena into global ones. It can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. This process is a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural and political forces. Globalization is very often used to refer to economic globalization, that is integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and the spread of technology.

Snapshots:

- An executive in London phones IBM for after-sales service and gets an operator responding from a call centre in Bangalore
- A protestor in Germany organizes an anti-protectionism demonstration in Brazil with participants from Mexico, South Korea, Argentina and South Africa.
- Filipina maids in Hong Kong, Singapore, Saudi Arabia consider themselves 'tent-makers' and missionaries to their wealthy employers.
- Professional European football teams with players dominated by Africans, Koreans; and Chinese table-tennis players representing Sweden, Germany, Singapore etc.
- A Japanese pilot communicates in English to the airport control tower in Bangkok on his final approach. Similarly Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese Anglican Bishops discussing affairs of the Church in English.
- A Chinese visits his friends in Hong Kong, who in turn receives visitors from Toronto and the SARS virus unknowingly triggered a worldwide health epidemic.
- Villagers in remote South African townships using mobile phones for communication without previously having access to fixed line phones or running water.
- Coffee drinkers enjoying their cuppa unaware that despite the high retail price they pay, coffee farmers were made out of work in third-world countries or were grossly underpaid for their labour.
- Wealthy gem buyer unaware that the diamonds for the one he loves were originally mined in Sierra Leone where the diamond trade fuelled bloody civil war.
- Specialist surgeons perform heart surgery in Los Angeles for a patient in Singapore via video-link.
- Nuclear waste taken from Japan is processed in England before being dumped in the Australian desert.
- The Wenchuan earthquake was beamed instantaneously into the living rooms of Americans and Europeans 24/7 in English by China's CCTV!

Glossary:

AOL, al-Jazeera, al-Qaeda, Apple Mac, Alibaba.com

Bluetooth, Blackberry, browser, blog, broadband

Cell phones, CNN, chat rooms, cyber crimes

Digitization, dot.com, desktop

E-commerce, email, environmental pollution, Ethernet, e-Bay

Face book, fiber-optic cable, FTP (file transfer protocol)

Google, GPS (global positioning system), global warming, G-8

HTML (hypertext markup language), Harry Potter (J K Rowling), HIV-Aids

Internet, intellectual property, IBM, iPod

Jihad.com, JPEG, Java

Kilobytes, KM (knowledge management)

Logon, leveraging, laptop

Microsoft, memory stick, MP3, migrant labour, mouse, MTV

Netscape, Napster, 911, Norton Utilities

Outsourcing, online booking

PDA (personal digital assistant), pod casting, Pay Pal, password

Quark, QQ.com

Renewable energy
Skype, Starbucks, SMS (short message service), screensaver
TCP/IP (transmission control protocol/internet protocol), terrorism
USB (universal serial bus), uploading, URL
Videoconferencing, VoIP (voice over internet protocol)
World Wide Web, Wikipedia, Wi-Fi, Windows, WTO
XML (extensible markup language)
You Tube, Yahoo, Y2K
Zee TV

‘Globalization is the transformation of economies, culture, innovation, and trade into a new global synthesis – a new conversation about how our civilization *might* evolve for the better. Globalization is about the deep collaboration of nations in a world aligning around free trade and shared global concerns such as climate, energy, economics, technology, security, and democracy. As we remove trade barriers, invest in technology, and increase communication, the idea is that we will drastically reduce friction between nations, thus increasing peace and prosperity for all’ (James Canton, ‘The Extreme Future – the top trends that will reshape the world in the next 20 years’, page 187.)

For the first time in human history, people everywhere have as their outer cognitive and experiential limits the *world-as-a-whole* (i.e., the view of Planet Earth from space), *humanity-as-a-single people* (i.e., the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), and *history-as-a-shared memory* (i.e., celebration of the Millennium). These three globally recognizable points of reference are not only imaginable, but unavoidable contexts for the construction of local/personal meaning, purpose and identity for an increasing portion of the world’s population, even in resistance...

So the world is now interconnected and ready for business. The question is who is doing business with whom and how is business done?

GLOBALISM (software for a connected world)

“*Globalization proper*” refers to an ongoing *set of processes* occurring within and across all the domains of human life that are differentiated by social scientists, i.e., economic, political, technological, social, cultural and the like. It is all of the processes by which such things as the telephone, democracy, fireworks, Christianity, Indian food, football fields and bubblegum become globally available. These processes include the development of communications and transportation technologies, the expansion of particular political systems, the integration of markets and political economies, as well as flows of people, goods, images, disease, religion and ideas across the planet. Such processes can be accurately described as *global* when these processes are inter-continental in both their scope (presence) and impact (consequence).

(Source: Lausanne Occasional Paper 30 on Globalisation and Mission, page

18).

The following are further excerpts from the same Lausanne Paper:

A useful analogy of *globalization* proper is the ocean. The oceans' waters literally cover the earth and its waves, although having regular patterns, are driven by many unseen and unpredictable forces: deep underwater currents, the tidal pull of the moon, the wind, ever-changing surface temperatures and the perimeters of coastal land and terrains. In this analogy, such forces of nature are like the processes of globalization as we see it unfold. Advanced communications and technologies, the integration of markets and political economies, the flow of people across national borders and the spread of pandemic disease, etc. can mean that globalization is as storm-tossed and threatening (even deadly in the case of riptides, tsunamis or typhoons) as they are useful for travel or leisure or securing a livelihood.

Among the central undercurrents of globalization, however, are global ideological forces, referred to here as *globalism*. As a byword for prominent economic, political, or religious worldviews that have fundamental assumptions about the way the world ought to be ordered, prominent examples of *globalism* would include nineteenth-century colonialism, early twentieth-century internationalism, communism, fascism, and post-colonialism; and to name a few of the more well-known recent forms, types of environmentalism, religious fundamentalism, and Islamicism. If *globalization* proper is like the ocean, *globalisms* are like the powerful current that push or force people into certain directions, and to think, act, work and relate in particular ways.

In this way, *globalization* refers to the broader processes in which, at different moments, particular kinds of *globalism* emerge and wrestle for the power to determine how we navigate and make sense of the world around us. Few eras exemplified such competition between opposing *globalisms* more than the Cold War, which witnessed worldwide struggle between Soviet-style Communism and American-inspired Democratic Capitalism. Before the collapse of the Soviet system, these two globalisms fought to the brink of nuclear annihilation — to control the course of an entire world system.

Undoubtedly, the most powerful form of *globalism* in recent decades has been that of neo-liberal capitalism, the all-controlling set of ideas underpinning a worldwide reorganization of economic institutions and policy following WWII that gained worldwide currency in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Epitomizing this economic reorganization are the now infamous structural adjustment policies of the World Bank, widespread privatization of nationalized industries, and the liberalization of capital flows that reached their apex in the 1990s

The neo Cultural and Economic Revolution that China has experienced since the late 70's, unleashed by the charismatic and visionary leader Deng Xiao Ping, that transformed China from a planned Socialist economy to a veiled market-driven Capitalistic economic framework, albeit with strong socialist imprimatur, is an unprecedented happening riding on the wave of

Globalisation 3.0 that might well trigger the commencement of Globalisation 4.0! Never in the history of human civilization have we witnessed 200 million people lifted out of poverty within half a generation! And never had there been an economy that experienced uninterrupted double-digit GDP growth for years on end!

The way nations, tribes, families and individual provide leadership and 'log on' to a globalised world very much determine its fate and destiny. The Chinese story could well have remained a 'what if' had not Deng envisioned the true value of a cat by saying it does not matter if it is black or white so long as it catches mice! Deng's globalism makes globalization work for the better for all. But it could also happen the other way round!

Friedman suggests that cultures that are open to new ideas adapt to the process of globalization easier than others, and ironically, China, with its regimentation and control, somewhat manages to find the balance between the apparently conflicting tide of freedom and control!

The more a people or culture is able to absorb new and foreign ideas and global best practice and merge those with its own strengths and traditions, the greater will be your advantage in a level-playing field. The natural ability to glocalize has been the strengths of the Indian culture, American culture, Japanese culture and lately the Chinese culture. The Indians, for example, take the view that the Mongols come and the Mongols go, the British come and the British go, we take the best and leave the rest – but we still eat curry and wear saris and honour our religion! That's glocalization at its best!

Open minded and visionary leadership, flexible and innovative work style, conducive and stable political culture with its appropriate legislative framework, a hardworking work ethic, and a commitment to social and economic empowerment, particularly for the otherwise marginalized - these are hallmarks of progressive societies led by responsible and capable leaders. This is the sort of software needed to drive the global connected world forward...

But in order to build an even better world, we need more than just any version of software for our super computers, what we need is the right sort of heart-ware! Were there glimpses of the caliber of leadership needed to steer entire societies in a global scale forward in all spheres of developments? History surely would throw up some examples for posterity?

PAX GLOBALA (heart ware to stay connected)

If China could benefit from the environment created by this globalization process through its carefully orchestrated brand of globalism and produced a modern day miracle, so should the rest of us be capable of doing so! The conditions in which we live in today may be likened to the 'kairos' moment spoken of in Scripture when 'in the fullness of time' or at just the right moment, a Savior was born!

Jesus was born into what could possibly be considered, on hindsight, the era of 'Globalization -8.0'! In those days, 'globalization' was spelt 'Pax Romana'. That was Latin for 'Roman peace', referring to a long period of relative peace and stability, where there was a standard protocol for communication and human interaction and inter-connectivity. There was one Empire, an Emperor to whom all must pay homage, a common language established, law and order promulgated, currency regulated, road systems built, educational institutions developed, sports and games promoted, trading flourished.

Greek was their HTML, 'all roads leading to Rome' their world wide web, trading houses their e-bays and amazons and the like, philosophical schools of thoughts their various O/S (operating systems), currency their bits and bytes. And it was in that environment that the gospel spread in an unprecedented way and reached the ends of the then known world within a generation, somewhat reminiscent of how our lives have changed irreversibly by the process of globalization within our life-time!

Driving the Pax Romana scenario were 3 key components, namely:

- 1 Relative Peace and Stability.
- 2 Common protocols of communication
- 3 Inter-Connectivity

It does appear that these same components are present in our so-called globalized era. From these inferences and cross-referencing, there could be significant concepts and ideas upon which we may learn from the achievements as well as the mistakes of the past? The prospects of positively influencing and impacting the world with the gospel perhaps could not have been better as we draw the parallel between Pax Romana and Pax Globala. Scriptures, and the implications for the mission of the Church, could now be viewed from an entirely new globalized perspective.

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice cries:

In the wilderness (digital graveyard) prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a (super fibre-optic) highway for our God.
Every valley (the exploited migrant labour) shall be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill (dictators and profiteers) be made low;
The uneven ground (social, informational and economic disparity) shall become level,
And the rough places (marginalized, unemployed, displaced, dislocated, environmentally damaged, lonely, excluded, disenfranchised) a plain.
And the glory of the Lord (peace, harmony, respect, dignity, reconciliation, healing, wholeness, fulfillment etc) shall be revealed,
And all flesh (global or international community – capitalists, communists, fascists, Islamicists, atheists, Episcopalians!, black, white, yellow, brown, young, old, male, female, gay, straight, democrats, republicans, labour, conservative, carnivores, vegans, godly, godless, PC or Mac user, rich, poor,

famous infamous, saint or sinner...) shall see it (the glory of the Lord) together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

What shall I cry?

1 The people fade, but the Word of the Lord will stand forever. (v8)
The temporal and transitional nature of all things... things will continue to change... Decide what are important, priorities in the midst of demanding loyalties, demands and options...

2 Go up to a high mountain and herald the good news, with a powerful voice, without fear or favour. (v9)
Stand on a vantage point (virtual and actual) and proclaim clearly a message of hope for the future! We are poised for effective communication at a speed and rate and manner unsurpassed in human history...

3 The Lord rules with mercy and love. (v10,11)
The proliferation of information readily accessible to all means that we are at the same time opened to words (with the nuances of interpretation and all its implications) of good and evil, constructive or destructive, truthful or deceptive etc. In other words, the propensity for wounding and alienation have now been magnified manifold... (e.g. the way the Anglican Communion is now being opened to public scrutiny as never before...)

4 Nations are nothing before him, the earth and mountains are measured as a scale.. (v12-17)
World hegemony, superpowerism, One World Order – such notions must give way to One who is mightier!

5 Have you not known? Have you not heard? (v28-31)

Doxology.

God gives strength to all who wait upon him; in other words, all who are willing to serve him.

Rev Canon Chye Ann Soh
Episcopal Asiamerica Conference
June 2008
Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Addendum

The Top Ten Globalization Trends

1. Linkages of nations' economies into one vibrant interconnected global economic network.
2. Sustainable globalization will contribute towards a greater degree of democratization thus reducing terrorism and promoting social harmony and peace.
3. Increase in quality of life and personal prosperity.
4. Antidote for anti-social and terrorist acts because improved standards of living addresses the core issue of poverty that breeds discontent and disillusionment.
5. Human rights protected and individuals are empowered in a 'Wiki' world.
6. Innovative technologies will open new vistas and horizons leading to greater creativity and resource for living.
7. Forces of 'evil and darkness' - counterfeiters, criminals, terrorists, extremists, etc - will battle also battle for global dominion.
8. Chinianisation - China and India will change the way the world operates.
9. The USA will continue to be an advocate of globalization and fuel its growth, 'as it was in the beginning, as it is now, and forevermore'!
10. Barriers between peoples and cultures will break down and becoming more like a 'family of nations', a vision of the New Jerusalem!

Note: most of these are fundamental economic in nature although they influence all spheres of life.