

## Cultural and political contexts for the future of world trade

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# Cultural and Political Contexts for the Future of World Trade

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## Cultural and Political Contexts for the Future of World Trade

*By Rosita Dellios*

### Introduction: The Global Potter

*Yesterday in the market stood a potter  
Pounding relentlessly his batch of clay.  
My inner ear could hear it sigh and groan:  
'Brother, I was once like you. Treat me gently!'*<sup>1</sup>

It is no revelation to suggest that the cultural and political contours of the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be shaped by that great potter of our times - globalization.<sup>2</sup> However, it is not always clear why this might be so. Among the causes three are especially noteworthy: globalization's unprecedented scope; its multidimensionality; and its propagation. In discussing these attributes, the contexts for the future of world trade become more readily discernible, especially under the guidance of an Asian regional case study. The selection of this region for understanding the cultural and political contexts for the future of world trade hinges on China's steady rise in global influence. Goods (and, increasingly, services) will not only be made *in* China but made *for* China. This does not imply a new cultural hegemony. Like Europe, which is not only 'European', China is not only 'Chinese'. Multiple traditions continue to express themselves in *mandalas* of their own syncretic design. This Sanskrit word which means circle is especially pertinent to the future of world trade.<sup>3</sup> As the Chinese trade *mandala* grows, it does so by absorbing tributaries of difference, thereby enriching itself and, in turn, further regionalizing - even globalizing - that composite (more-than-material) wealth. The West is becoming as much a part of contemporary China, and the East more generally, as the 'Other' is permeating the West. This, as stressed above, is not homogeneity. These are *mandalized* globalizations with Centres of cultural orientation, acting as ideational sources,<sup>4</sup> rather than Wallestianian Centres of industrial power dominating a dependent Periphery.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (quatrain 37)

<sup>2</sup> There are many definitions for this umbrella term. The following two are representative of the meanings ascribed to globalization:

- 'the cluster of technological, economic, and political innovations that have drastically reduced the barriers to economic, political, and cultural exchange' - Daniel W. Drezner, 'Globalization and Policy Convergence', (2001) Vol. 3, No. 1 *International Studies Review*, 53
- 'a marked *reduction in the barriers* between societies and states, an *increasing homogeneity* of societies and states and an *increase in the volume of interactions* between societies' - F. Halliday, *The World at 2000: Perils and Promises* (Palgrave, Houndmills, 2001), p. 61

<sup>3</sup> On the contemporary use of the mandala metaphor, see select articles in *The Culture Mandala*, The Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, Bond University. A number of issues appear electronically on [www.international-relations.com](http://www.international-relations.com).

<sup>4</sup> This term derives from the constructivist theoretical framework in International Relations, discussed in K. C. Chwee, 'The Ideational Sources of Chinese Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis', (2001)

## Globalization's Scope

Like God, globalization is often considered omnipresent, even omnipotent. Mimicking the evolution of thought which proposes that the divine centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, globalisation in its financial guise may be said to be 'located everywhere but regulated nowhere'.<sup>6</sup> Global economic integration has been driven by market capitalism and assisted by the opening of new electronic trade routes. In a broader historical sense, globalization's scope pertains to the universal extension of the European world order. In 'a world defined by pervasive Western influence and power',<sup>7</sup> it may not even be possible in the current period to find an authentic non-Western mediated perspective, let alone a fully-fledged 'culture'.

This is why *syncretism* - the fusion or synthesis of encountered traditions - has become a catchword in efforts to characterise the globalization of culture.<sup>8</sup> Even Swaziland's King Mswati III is not immune to late modernity's claims on his sovereign traditions. 'It is our culture that I should marry as many wives as I can,' he proclaimed to a global media intrigued by the abduction of an 18-year-old to be his 10<sup>th</sup> wife. 'I cannot allow myself to be forced to follow the Western culture.' Yet his right to practise traditional culture needs to be viewed in the context of his purchase of a luxury jet for the purported purpose of another modern practice: to travel in search of foreign aid for alleviating poverty in his country.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it can be argued that poverty itself has become a Western mediated concept. It serves to justify Western-style development, despite this very development having destroyed people's support structures causing widespread destitution.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes poor people are not destitute but simply 'underdeveloped', to quote the president of a comparatively overdeveloped country, the United States of America, back in 1949.<sup>11</sup> It was then that the US became the prime defender of the European Enlightenment-inspired system,

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Vol. 3, No. 2 *Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur) 21-44. See also J.M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000), Ch. 5

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein's world system theory forms a recognised part of the theoretical debates in International Relations. See I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (Academic Press, London, 1974)

<sup>6</sup> This is the language used by an American investigator of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) which lost US\$15 billion. - R. Wilson, 'Blue Hawaii', in A. Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 1998), p. 330, citing Robert Jackson, 'BCCI's Shadowy Web Aided Noreiga in "Shell Game"', *Honolulu Advertiser*, 12 August 1991, p. D2. On transnational banks (TNBs), see C.W. Kegley, Jr and E.R. Wittkopf, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* 8th edn (St. Martin's, New York, 2001), pp. 227-228

<sup>7</sup> R. L. Euben, 'Contingent Borders, Syncretic Perspectives: Globalization, Political Theory, and Islamizing Knowledge' (2002) Vol. 4, No. 1 *International Studies Review* 27. On the 'complete Europeanization of the earth and of humankind', see M. Heidegger, 'A Dialogue on Language', in *On the Way to Language*, trans. P.D. Hertz (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1971), pp. 15-16; and discussion of this in F. R. Dallmayr, 'Globalization and Inequality, (2002) Vol. 4, No. 2 *International Studies Review* 148-153.

<sup>8</sup> On syncretism, see J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1988); and Euben, 'Contingent Borders . . .', p. 26

<sup>9</sup> M. Dynes, 'Starving Nation's King Pays \$79m for His Own Jet', *The Australian*, 14 November 2002, p. 8

<sup>10</sup> A. Nandy, 'The Beautiful, Expanding Future of Poverty: Popular Economics as a Psychological Defense', (2002) Vol. 4, No. 2 *International Studies Review* 107-121

<sup>11</sup> President Truman, in his inaugural address before Congress in 1949, defined much of the world as 'underdeveloped areas'.

and in doing so acquired a clear preponderance of wealth and power - so much so it became known as a superpower. Such was its worldwide projection of power, in all its forms - hard and soft, coercive and attractive - that it lent its name to a precursor of globalization: *Americanization*.

Americanization relates to the 'cultural imperialism thesis' which was popular from the late 1960s through to the 1980s. It held that American cultural dominance over more vulnerable societies occurred through the practice of corporate capitalism symbolized by Coca-Cola, Disneyland, Hollywood, and other such icons.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the *American Dream* became synonymous with the 'soft power' of attraction associated with US hegemony.<sup>13</sup> Out of this notion came the more widely recognised 'thesis of global cultural convergence'.<sup>14</sup>

When as few as 20 media/entertainment multinational corporations, such as Time Warner-America Online, Disney and Universal, account for 95% of the global entertainment market, and almost all of the most visited Web sites are located in the USA,<sup>15</sup> it leaves very little scope for non-American culture to be propagated. With the opening of trade through the World Trade Organisation (WTO), especially now that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a member, it is reasonable to expect an even more extensive diffusion of Western contemporary culture through the transnational entertainment industries. However, there is also a less obvious way in which commercial cultural products are transmitted. Moreover, these products need not be Euro-American. For example, the diffusion of Japanese dramas into China through pirated video compact disks (VCDs) indicates that technological globalization can serve - even if in unauthorized ways - an inflow of culture initiated by regional markets, and not only corporate outflows 'pushed from the economic centre', be it New York or Tokyo.<sup>16</sup>

In business practice, too, Western corporate culture has modified Chinese, Arab, Malay, Indian and other ritualised business cultures in which elaborate etiquette systems for relationship-building are being replaced by profit-directed efficiencies. These include coolly professional 'transparency' of relations and an inordinate emphasis on interventionist practices, finite projects, quantifiable outcomes and strategic planning. Conversely, the Chinese *guanxi* (cultivation of networks) system favours friends and relatives as trusted associates.<sup>17</sup> A stranger can only be trusted once he or she becomes a friend, even if not a relative. This reflects the traditional diplomacy of Europeans as well as other civilizations, when national alliances were made through intermarriage and hence the formation of family relationships. Despite

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<sup>12</sup> See Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, pp. 79-97

<sup>13</sup> US *soft power* may generally be said to comprise 'cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions'. J. Nye, JR., *Bound to Lead* (Basic Books, New York, 1990), p. 72. See also, R.O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984) on American hegemony.

<sup>14</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, p. 83. The convergence theory is also discussed widely in the globalization literature, including F. Jameson, 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue', in F. Jameson and M. Miyoshi (eds) *The Cultures of Globalization* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1998), p. 56-57; and Kegley and Wittkopf, *World Politics* . . . , pp. 298-302

<sup>15</sup> Kegley and Wittkopf, *ibid.*, pp. 298-300

<sup>16</sup> Y. Nakano, 'Who Initiates a Global Flow? Japanese Culture in Asia' (2002) Vol. 1, No. 2 *Visual Communication* 25pp

<sup>17</sup> See J. J. Schiro, *The New Silk Road: Secrets of Business Success in China Today* (Wiley & Sons, New York, 2000)

the immediate challenge of assimilating the new MBA business habits - or 'international best practice' - as a growing trend in Chinese business, 'banquet diplomacy' has yet to be jettisoned in favour of impersonal transactions. Not only do Chinese and Japanese, members as they are of the Confucian culture area, engage in these ritualised business practices, but so do culturally engaged Westerners. For example, Australian negotiators secured a US\$12.5 billion natural gas agreement with China in 2002 after extensive 'banquet diplomacy' and the prestige 'face-giving' measure of having the Australian prime minister as a key negotiator.

With regard to the *global cultural convergence* thesis, it may be concluded that, as Appadurai puts it, the 'globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization', but homogenizing mechanisms such as media, advertising, language and dress do exist.<sup>18</sup> They become part of the socio-economic profile of many countries. This, in turn, could enhance a liberal-democratic-free market culture; but equally, reaction to Western-system pervasiveness may manifest as unexpected innovation (for example, capitalism in Communist China); violent backlash (anti-globalization protests since 1999); and/or fundamentalism (most disturbingly, the global terrorist networks of al-Qa'ida and allied regional groups).

It comes as no surprise, then, that where *cultural convergence* dominated debates up to the 1980s, the *divergence thesis* become popular in the 1990s. Questions arose as to the implied unilinear transmission of culture - from strong to weak, North to South, Centre to Periphery, America to the rest of the world. Tomlinson summarizes the position well when he points out:

Movement between cultural/geographical areas always involves interpretation, translation, mutation, adaptation, and 'indigenization' as the receiving culture brings its own cultural resources to bear, in dialectical fashion, upon 'cultural imports'.<sup>19</sup>

Even Coca-Cola has been rendered in some parts of the world into a 'native product', people being unaware of its American origins.<sup>20</sup> Again, the syncretic dimension arises, calling for a closer consideration of the second attribute of globalization, its multidimensionality.

### **Globalization's Multidimensionality**

The nonlinearity of cultural transmission indicates that the scope of globalization is not merely a matter of breadth. The global exceeds the worldwide. It extends to a multidimensionality that befits the global potter, but strives rather awkwardly when deprived of metaphor. Thus, to assist matters, Robertson introduced *glocalization* - an amalgam of globalization and localization - to convey the 'interpenetrating' principles

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<sup>18</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997), p. 42

<sup>19</sup> D. Howes (ed) *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities* (Routledge, London, 1996), cited in Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, p. 84

<sup>20</sup> Tomlinson, *ibid.*

of 'the particular and the universal'.<sup>21</sup> He appropriated the term from global marketing discourse,<sup>22</sup> whereby mass products were modified to suit local tastes (for example *halal* chicken for KFC outlets in Muslim communities). Another neologism, Rosenau's *framgration*,<sup>23</sup> combines fragmentation and integration to denote a similar situation pertaining to the predicament of the state. On the one hand, it is absorbed by global forces into larger networks; on the other, it is simultaneously threatened by secessionist-prone identity politics. More ambitious, perhaps, in finding words for the scope of globalization's multidimensionality is Jameson. He thinks of globalization as 'the multiple structural possibilities and combinations made available by this most ambiguous ideological concept and its alternating contents'.<sup>24</sup> Beyond the labyrinthine, and reminiscent of Tomlinson (quoted above with regard to 'indigenization'), lies an essentially dialectical process: globalization's omnipresence has been syncretized to the point where that which appears to derive from European culture is no longer necessarily 'owned' - let alone driven - by the West, in some neo-imperialist fashion. 'For the first time in the two centuries of Western-dominated industrialization,' concurs Castells, 'West and East . . . are deeply integrated in a pattern that does not reflect overwhelming Western domination.'<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, this is not necessarily a divergence from the basic aims of the liberal European system which 'is one that deliberately eschews centralized power and tries to maximize local centers of power as much as possible and in as many hands as possible'.<sup>26</sup> Thus, like the emanating Godhead that could no longer be conceptually contained, the West is being 'de-centred'.<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that its power - ideational and otherwise - has diminished, but that it manifests at different levels and through diverse expressions. The different levels, moreover, can be interpenetrating, and syncretically inclined. Thus the model which maximizes 'local centers of power' might yet prove to be the most robust in a widespread system of global governance. This is where *subsidiarity* could increasingly define political relations in a one-world future.

Subsidiarity entails decisions taken at the most basic level. *Paternalistic* relations - the hegemonic face of 'imposing' a European liberal order - can transform to *enabling* ones through the mechanism of subsidiarity. The European Union (EU) has enshrined subsidiarity as a principle that allows subnational regions political representation within the supranational organisation. Historically, the notion of subsidiarity may be found in the Roman Empire and imperial China's tributary system. The Romans encouraged municipal self-government and extended citizenship to subject peoples. This conferred status and a sense of familial relations. The inhabitants of 'free states' proudly served as local senators or magistrates, ensuring their names were thus

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<sup>21</sup> R. Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in M. Fetherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities* (Sage, London, 1995), p. 30

<sup>22</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, pp. 195-196

<sup>23</sup> J.N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, UK, 1997), p. 38

<sup>24</sup> Jameson, 'Notes on Globalization . . .', p. 58

<sup>25</sup> M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996), p. 309, quoted in J. Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999), p. 93

<sup>26</sup> V. Ferraro, 'The "Seed of Enlightenment" and Humanity's Future', *Reviews*, (2002) Vol. 4, No. 1 *International Studies Review* 148

<sup>27</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, p. 94

recorded.<sup>28</sup> By the third century, Roman citizenship had become 'virtually universal' in the empire; the Romans, evidently, ruled by consent.<sup>29</sup>

A similar volunteerism obtained through the tributary system of imperial China. It modelled itself on Confucian family relations (discussed above in terms of *guanxi*) with the Chinese emperor at the head of an international household. Those who wished to partake of the Chinese world order, be it for reasons of trade, protection and/or prestige, were obliged to *kowtow* to the emperor, the 'Son of Heaven'. Tributary kingdoms were brothers, cousins, sons-in-law but never strangers or enemies. Further cementing the relationship, as shown in *The Malay Annals*, was the perception that they shared a common ancestor, Iskandar (Alexander the Great).<sup>30</sup> This was a particularly fitting appropriation in view of Alexander's one-world vision.<sup>31</sup> It is also an example of syncretic cultural incorporation which, in Alexander's case as in many others, continues today on a global scale through the auspices of Hollywood.<sup>32</sup>

It should be remembered that China, too, held a one-world philosophy in the form of *datong* ('all under Heaven are one'). Its world explorer during the Ming dynasty, Zheng He, is similarly rendered relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in this instance through the global reach of the bestseller. For Admiral Zheng He it came in the form of *1491: The Year China Discovered the World*.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it was Zheng He who, during his voyages on behalf of the emperor, enrolled many a tributary state with gifts and promises of trade and protection. Local rulers enhanced their legitimacy through the Chinese emperor's official appointment and seal, as well as confirmation of the ruling succession.<sup>34</sup> The system was at its strongest in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and included as many as 100 kingdoms. This structure of Chinese control was not rigid, nor did it imply absorption. Moreover, it was not necessary to be of Confucian culture to be part of the tributary system. An example of a tributary state which prospered under the Chinese regionalism of the time was Srivijaya. Lasting some six centuries

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<sup>28</sup> J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1975), p. 168

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. It should be noted, however, that the rights of these citizens were at the same time deflated, with high versus low status groups.

<sup>30</sup> The following excerpt is illustrative:

This letter is dispatched from beneath the sandals of the feet of the King of Heaven [the Chinese emperor], to be placed above the diadem of the Raja of Malaca [sic]. "Verily we have heard that the Raja of Malaca is a great raja, for which reason we have desired his friendship and attachment, because we are also descended from Raja Secander [Iskandar] Zulkarneini, and of the same extraction as the Raja of Malaca. There is no raja in the universal world greater than me . . .  
- *The Malay Annals*, trans. J. Leyden (The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, MBRAS Reprint 20, Selangor, Malaysia), pp. 173-174. See also, J.J. Ras, *Hikajat Bandjar: A Study in Malay Historiography* (Martinus nijhoff, The Hague, 1968), pp. 84-85; M.T. Osman, *Bunga Rampai: Aspects of Malay Culture* (Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1988), pp. 132-133; and J. Drakard, *A Kingdom of Words: Language and Power in Sumatra* (Oxford University Press, Shah Alam, 1999), p. 149. I am grateful to Dr Paulette Dellios (personal communication, Gold Coast, Australia, November 2002) for drawing to my attention the Iskandar connection.

<sup>31</sup> As Ferguson (*Utopias of the Classical World*, p. 101) remarked: 'He changed a narrow vision to a broad one, partly because he expanded the Greek world geographically, partly because he came to ignore racial distinctions.'

<sup>32</sup> 'Alexander the Great Conquers Hollywood: Why an Ancient Hero is Tomorrow's Golden Boy', cover story, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 23-24 November 2002

<sup>33</sup> G. Menzies, *1491: The Year China Discovered the World* (Bantam Press, New York, 2002)

<sup>34</sup> E.O. Reischauer and J.K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1962), p. 319



(from the 7th to the 13th centuries), this Sumatran-based empire - or *mandala*, as classical Indian and Southeast Asian polities were termed<sup>35</sup> - was the greatest and most durable maritime trading power in the Southeast Asian region. It was well adapted to its environment, making use of the sea and its strategic location for trade between China and India - and even further to Persia. As a tributary state of China, Srivijaya had the right to trade with China and so surpassed its rivals as a maritime power. Chinese suzerainty proved vital to Srivijaya in boosting its capacities as a trading nation.<sup>36</sup>

A 21<sup>st</sup> century version of this is being re-enacted in the form of a regional free trade agreement between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to form what will become the world's largest free trade zone in terms of population by 2010. Tariffs are to be reduced to between 5% and zero and investment barriers removed. This trade region will create an integrated market of 1.7 billion people, account for an estimated total GDP of US\$2 trillion (10 per cent of world GDP), a trade volume of US\$1.2 trillion per annum, and 40 per cent of global foreign exchange reserves.<sup>37</sup> The old Srivijayan *mandala* now lives through its modern descendants along the strategic Malacca Strait: namely, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. A past regionalism is being resurrected under modern trade conditions but with equally decentralized units of cooperation. The rule of non-subjugation remains as before. Regionalism then, as now and in the foreseeable future, relies on its sovereign parts to cohere. The most advanced form of this expression is a 'pooled sovereignty'<sup>38</sup> agreed upon in the European Union (EU). Such an arrangement may well reach the China-East Asian region in the next phase of global politico-economic integration, though at present it is not a favoured development. Decolonization and nation-building are still within recent historical memory in East Asia. Hence any suggestion of 'pooled sovereignty' is not likely to prove acceptable in the near future - though increased cooperation is.

Surveying the temporal expanse of regional formations, from the classical past to the projected future, certain observations may be made about subsidiarity as a context in the future in global affairs. While the Roman and Chinese empires operated a form of subsidiarity in their multi-ethnic domains, and Europe today has enshrined it within its new supranational body, the EU, its appearance at the global level is still formative. One may speculate that subsidiarity is also a phenomenon of contemporary globalization in that traditionally rendered Centre-Periphery, North-South relations

<sup>35</sup> G. Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968); I.W. Mabbett, 'Kingship at Angkor' (1978) Vol. 66, No. 2 *Journal of the Siam Society*, 58pp.; O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Religion in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1982); C. Higham, *The Archaeology of Mainland Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), Ch. 5; C. Mackerras (ed.), *Eastern Asia: An Introductory History* 3rd edn, (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 2000), Ch 8; and D. Kingsbury, *South-East Asia: A Political Profile* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2001) pp. 14-17

<sup>36</sup> M. Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Illustrated Introductory History*, 8th edn (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000) pp. 27-30

<sup>37</sup> *China Daily*, 'ASEAN Begins Negotiations on Free Trade Zone' 14 May 2002; *Businessline*, 'Meeting the Chinese Challenge, Asean Way', 27 June 2002; and Stephen Lunn, 'ASEAN Snubs Canberra and Tokyo on Ties', *The Australian*, 6 November 2002, p. 8

<sup>38</sup> This refers to legal authority given by the member states to their supranational organization to make decisions on public policy questions. Such decisions were previously made only at the sovereign state level. See R.O. Keohane and S. Hoffmann (eds), *The New European Community: Decisionmaking and Institutional Change* (Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1991)

need to be rebalanced if such vital concerns as development assistance from donor countries can be taken seriously by both sides.<sup>39</sup> Otherwise, corruption and *bad faith* intervene, evaporating any goodwill or practical improvements to people's quality of life. Worsening levels of corruption are only one negative scenario. Another is that of globalized guerilla warfare, conducted by largely unrepresentative political activists. This method of warfare was popularized during the revolutionary decolonization period of the previous century, most memorably in China, Vietnam and Cuba. Political terror under secular left-wing identity continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as witnessed in South America and the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. Guerilla warfare with its hit-and-run tactics that seek to destabilize the enemy over a prolonged period, but not take territory, is part of a broader 'people's war', as Mao Zedong called it. The final phase of people's war is to fight for territory by more conventional means in order to effect a change of regime.<sup>40</sup> This was clearly demonstrated by the Vietnamese defeating the French colonial power, culminating in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Today's globalized terrorism differs in many ways from the national liberation struggles of the past, but still operates in a deterritorialized context. It relies on guerilla terrorist strikes as the prelude to overthrowing existing regimes of power and replacing them with an alternative world order: a particular brand of Islamic hegemony, perhaps, under a council-elected caliphate.<sup>41</sup> At a local level it would entail the creation of 'Islamic states governed by Sharia law'.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, there is evidence of disgruntled populations in existing Muslim countries, such as Uzbekistan, supporting more extreme measures to realise greater social equity.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, the 2002 Bali bombings have suggested an objective to build an Islamic state spanning Southeast Asia.<sup>44</sup> The current 'guerilla' phase of global terrorism resembles not only aspects of Mao's revolutionary people's war, but also transnational corporations (TNCs) establishing branches across the world. Just as TNCs shift their manufacturing bases to the most competitive labour markets, global terrorism activates different theatres of operations in accordance with better opportunities. As the war-on-terror led by the USA was taken to Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida, through its system of decentralised ' sleeper cells', easily shifted focus to Southeast Asia where some 3000 local (Malaysian, Indonesian and Filipino) Islamic radicals had received training in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> This region had been rendered vulnerable by the Asian Crisis that began with dramatic currency devaluations in 1997. In Indonesia's case,

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<sup>39</sup> This is because over 50 years of development assistance has failed to produce 'development'. To quote Nandy, 'The Beautiful, Expanding Future of Poverty . . .': 'The underlying myth of development, that it will remove all poverty forever from all corners of the world, now lies shattered' (p. 108).

<sup>40</sup> See *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tze-Tung* (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1966); and R. Dellios, *Modern Chinese Defence Strategy: Present Developments, Future Directions* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989)

<sup>41</sup> John Stapleton, 'Zealots' Quest for Purity', *The Australian*, 19 November 2002, p. 13

<sup>42</sup> Zachary Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror - al-Qa'ida's Southeast Asian Network', quoted in Martin Chulov, '3000 Southeast Asian Sleeper Cells Trained in Terror', *The Australian*, 27 November 2002, p. 1

<sup>43</sup> Stapleton, 'Zealots' Quest for Purity'.

<sup>44</sup> See Cameron Stewart, 'Days of Living Dangerously' and P. Kelly, 'The Islamic Front is at Our Back Door', *The Weekend Australian*, 19-20 October 2002, pp. 19, 30

<sup>45</sup> Zachary Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror - al-Qa'ida's Southeast Asian Network', quoted in Martin Chulov, '3000 Southeast Asian Sleeper Cells Trained in Terror', *The Australian*, 27 November 2002, p. 1

the financial crisis led to social and political crises, climaxing in President Suharto's resignation in 1998 after three decades of authoritarian rule. With the success of the *reformasi* movement in allowing greater political freedoms came less stringent controls on radical Islamic organizations. This, combined with populations still suffering from the depredations inflicted by the Asian financial crisis, and a government more concerned with avoiding fragmentation than tracking terrorists, rendered Indonesia a more hospitable environment for criminal operations. There was even a certain glamour associated with Osama bin Laden, as demonstrated by the name 'Osama' emblazoned on the rear window of a minibus in Jakarta in 2002.<sup>46</sup> Nearby Singapore and Malaysia were also used by terrorist conspirators, though operations there were foiled through a more focused security apparatus in a less dispersed geography.

Having examined the negative scenario of subsidiarity, that is, a counter-cultural approach - or a fanatical Islamist Cultural Revolution - it is worth switching back to development and a positive scenario of subsidiarity. Recent thinking in development studies suggests that communities' *capacity to concert* - meaning a people's 'capacity to orchestrate their own development' - may also have important macro socio-economic implications that will drive global institution-building.<sup>47</sup> This form of subsidiarity indicates that globalized culture as it manifests today may be said to have gone beyond mere Americanization and entered the domain of postcolonial cosmopolitanism. Such a movement takes for granted Western influence, indeed incorporates it as a platform from which to build a global society. This entails the 'democratization of the global structure itself' through 'self-development and self-participation'.<sup>48</sup> These features for a cosmopolitical system are conducive to social justice which, in turn, would deprive terrorists, like the communists a generation before them, of the grievances which fuel their cause. However, unlike an orchestrated strategy with a US 'coalition of the willing', cosmopolitics is not concerned with micro-management. Subsidiarity allows for the localisation of global life through its own perceptual prism. This often results in a recurring theme of future cultural and political life, that of syncretism.

At this point it is worth returning to Alexander the Great. It is said of him in the national newspaper of a former Chinese tributary region, now the Federation of Malaysia, that he was 'the first exponent of globalization'. Moreover,

since it was impossible to micromanage all the territories that had been conquered, syncretism or the adaptation of Greek to local practices, customs and religions became the norm. That it survived as a force was a result of the many accommodations made. Had the Greeks strived for ideological purity, it is doubtful that it would have survived.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Seen and photographed by this writer in June 2002.

<sup>47</sup> R.E. Daubon and H.H. Saunders, 'Operationalizing Social Capital: A Strategy to Enhance Communities' "Capacity to Concert" (2002) Vol. 3, No. 2 *International Studies Perspectives* 15pp

<sup>48</sup> Dallmayr, 'Globalization and Inequality', pp. 153, 155

<sup>49</sup> S.C.M. Wong, 'Limits of Language and Culture in Social Cohesion', *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), 30 September 2002, p. 10. Classical archeology academic, Lesley Beaumont, concurs: Alexander married a Bactrian princess, Roxane, and many of his men married Persian women. His method was not to force Greek culture on subjugated people but to initiate an exchange between the cultures of East and West.

Malaysia - with its multi-ethnic, multi-religious citizenry - can well relate to the message of its incorporated ancestor. Iskandar forms part of the Malay world's mosaic,<sup>50</sup> a work-in-progress that has been put to the test by financial crisis, terrorist connections, and the bypassing of *kampung* (village) life via the construction of a 'multimedia supercorridor' (a global icon). Still, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Malaysia, like neighbouring Singapore, continues to sit solidly at the crossroads of transnational flows. The Straits of Malacca littoral states, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, share to varying degrees the condition of global trader in an East-West fusion, just as they had in a previous incarnation when they operated under the maritime trading empire of Srivijaya.

Indonesia is syncretically more complex in that it retains its villages not for museumized nostalgia, as Malaysia and Singapore tend to do,<sup>51</sup> but out of habit and as habitat. The above-mentioned globally networked religious extremists use the countryside to surround the cities, as occurred in commercialized Bali, while nostalgia remains the preserve of an urban-based Occidentalism. The latter is well illustrated by the following newspaper item. On 11 November 2002, a month after the Bali bombings in which some 200 tourists, many of them Australian, lost their lives, *The Australian* published a photo of Indonesians not as terrorist suspects or as Muslims praying but as a people of unexpected personas. In this case, they were enacting the culture of the American West. The caption read:

Studio audiences in cowboy outfits take part in line dancing at the Indonesian state television's weekly prime-time *Country Road* program in Jakarta. The program features a parade of Indonesian groups and singers, who play old US hits in the original English to appreciative studio audience members clad in check shirts, jeans and boots.<sup>52</sup>

American Wild West 'nostalgia' extends even to the night markets of Java's cultural capital, Yogyakarta, where Native American paraphernalia were being sold in 2002. Street markets which combine a range of products, from the locally produced, to the mass manufactured, and to the fashionably foreign, may be found from Yogya to Kunming. This is an indication that the 'developing world' accounts for consumer tastes across the entire spectrum of traditional, modern and postmodern. Those parts of the developing world that are themselves composed of numerous ethnicities and cross-temporal traditions, such as the above examples of Kunming, capital of China's multi-ethnic Yunnan Province, and the contemporary descendants of the trading kingdoms (*mandalas*) of old, may well reflect a greater sophistication in syncretic culture formation.

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Quoted in L. Slattery, 'The Alexander Technique', *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 23-24 November 2002, p. 20

<sup>50</sup> 'Mosaic' is a deliberately chosen metaphor in view of the popularity of mosaics in Greek antiquity and, according to Irvine, some Javanese scholars' preference for 'Mosaicism' as a term instead of 'Syncretism' to describe the Javanese ability to assimilate new religio-cultural influences into their existing traditions. - D. Irvine, *Leather Gods and Wooden Heroes: Java's Classical Wayang* (Times Editions, Singapore, 1996), p. 12

<sup>51</sup> See P. Dellios, 'The Museumification of the Village: Cultural Subversion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', *The Culture Mandala* (2002) Vol. 5, No.1, available on [www.international\\_relations.com](http://www.international_relations.com)

<sup>52</sup> 'In Focus', *The Australian*, 11 November 2002, p. 15

This is not to say that the task is an untroubled one. Indonesia's self-described 'unity-in-diversity' appears to house a wide spectrum of identities, from *abangan* (these being 'Animist-Hindu-Buddhist Javanese Muslim'),<sup>53</sup> Islamist militants, the nationalist intelligentsia, contemporary Occidentalists, in addition to the numerous nationalities such as Bataks, Sundanese, Buginese, and Madurese. With a backdrop of environmental concerns, especially the seasonal forest fires that produce the notorious cross-border 'haze', Indonesia has yet to *mandalize* its prevailing diversities under conditions of accelerated globalization. Syncretic cultures seek integration of the parts into unified identity, which is what a *mandala* does. In Javanese terms it has traditionally been expressed thus:

Over time the integration of indigenous and foreign cultures and beliefs came to have its own ordered pattern. This pattern has been likened to the *mandala* design of the Borobodur temple or the traditional Javanese ceremonial rice cone, in which various elements and stages are integrated into a single design to create the symbol of Sangkan Paran, the Cycle of Life according to which all life springs from and eventually returns to the Supreme Consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

It is pertinent to note that the *mandala* has exhibited two contexts of meaning thus far. One is the political, in relation to Srivijaya as a political system derived from Hindu statecraft;<sup>55</sup> the other is the psycho-cultural, in which a spiritual tradition of syncretism is expressed. Parallels may be found in the contemporary phenomenon of what Appadurai calls 'diasporic public spheres', created via the 'mass media (both interactive and expressive) and the movement of refugees, activists, students, and laborers'.<sup>56</sup> Quite apart from the political and psycho-cultural, there are regional integrational implications in this diasporic syncretism that do not await the 'pooled sovereignty' (or orchestrated) regionalism of the EU model. As Dirlik observes, 'the result of the Asian and Pacific diaspora is to enhance the structural integration of the region (albeit bringing with it, dialectically, previously unknown structural tensions)'.<sup>57</sup> While an organic, diaspora-assisted, regionalism is flourishing in the Asia-Pacific region, China's growing influence can be expected to inject a certain controlled orchestration of regional development, as evidenced in the above-mentioned China-ASEAN FTA agreement, as well as China's own intra-regional development policy.<sup>58</sup> Taken to the broader dimension of the West and Non-West, one may observe that they are not necessarily undergoing monocultural convergence - a system as much out of step with ecologically favoured farming practices as sociological developments - but may well be giving way to a syncretic culture with - to borrow Indonesia's ambivalent term - *reformasi* characteristics. This somewhat

<sup>53</sup> Irvine, *Leather Gods* . . . , p. 12. See also website: *Javanese Mystical Movements*, last revised 16 September 2002, <http://www.xs4all.nl/~wichm/javmys1.html>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 13, footnote 54, citing A. Ciptoprawiro, *Filsawat Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1986) p. 27

<sup>55</sup> Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, trans. R. Shamasastri, (Mysore Printing and Publishing House, Mysore, 1967)

<sup>56</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997), pp. 22-23

<sup>57</sup> A. Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure', in A. Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> See R. Dellios, 'Chinese Forms of Regionalism: Organic and Orchestrated', Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, Warwick University, UK, 1999, [www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CSGR/conf99/Dellios.PDF](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CSGR/conf99/Dellios.PDF)

menacing shadow to an otherwise enabling *mandala* needs to be viewed under the third distinguishing feature of globalization, that of its propagation.

## Globalization's Propagation

The Macquarie Dictionary definition of 'propaganda' is as follows:

1. systematic spreading of a religion or doctrine.
2. (spreading of) ideas, arguments or facts used to persuade people to think well or badly about some person, cause, or movement.

The word comes from the Latin and was used in the name of a papal committee established in 1622 for the propagation of the faith. Globalization, too, is subject to propagation. Its continued development is vital to the prevailing paradigm of the neoliberal economic order, also known as the capitalist world economy. Free market principles via non-discriminatory trade are an ideal seen to be advanced by the 'borderless' scope of globalization. The World Bank, itself an agency of this neoliberal economic system, has reported globalization (in the form of 'increased integration into the world economy') to be a strong predictor of wealth creation in developing countries.<sup>59</sup>

Globalization has its prophets and proselytizes, from corporate elites and international financial institutions to influential columnists like Thomas Friedman who admits that while globalization is 'homogenizing cultures',<sup>60</sup>

it is also enabling people to share their unique individuality farther and wider. It makes us want to chase after the Lexus [the car] more intensely than ever and cling to our olive trees [traditions] more tightly than ever. It enables us to reach into the world as never before and it enables the world to reach into each of us as never before.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, as the Sufi poem opening this chapter suggests, there is cause for calling upon its compassion. The forces of globalization, like those of the Chinese Heaven (tien) and Earth, are capable of treating humans like straw dogs blown away in the wind.<sup>62</sup> The present historical era has been described as one when 'extreme individualism' and 'market societies shape our views of what is natural'.<sup>63</sup> In a profits-driven globalized economy, the richest 20 percent of the world accounts for 86 percent of global consumption while the remainder (80 percent) survive on 14 per cent of consumption spending.<sup>64</sup> Disparities in wealth occur *intranationally* as much as internationally.

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<sup>59</sup> World Bank, *Globalization, Growth and Poverty: Building an Inclusive World Economy*, 2002, on <http://econ.worldbank.org>

<sup>60</sup> Contra Appadurai, above, who speaks of homogenizing mechanisms, like the media and fashion.

<sup>61</sup> T. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Harper Collins, London, 1999), p. 331

<sup>62</sup> The Daoist classic, *Daodejing (Book of the Way and Its Power)* states that 'Heaven and earth are ruthless, and treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs' (Bk 1, V). Straw dogs were used by the ancient Chinese as divine offerings and were therefore treated with reverence while serving this function. Thereafter they were discarded as useless, often trampled upon. See translators note in *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching [Daodejing]*, trans. D.C. Lau (Penguin, London, 1963) p. 9

<sup>63</sup> M. Lerner, *The Politics of Meaning* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., New York, 1996), p. 19

<sup>64</sup> UN Development Program, cited in K. Danaher, 'The New Protest Movement: It's About Demanding a Say in the Future of the Planet', *The Observer*, London, 29 April 2001. *Common Dreams News Center*, online: [www.commondreams.org/views01/0429-07.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/views01/0429-07.htm)

Latham notes that the upper 20 percent of households in Australia hold 65 percent of the country's wealth, while the lower 20 percent 'owns nothing at all'.<sup>65</sup> Nandy, cited above in relation to the manipulation of poverty for Western developmental agendas, sees a direct link between globalization and poverty: 'The presently trendy slogan of globalization can be read as the newest effort to disguise both the declining political clout of the historically disadvantaged and an interest in poverty.'<sup>66</sup>

Thus the subsidiarity depicted above could, in a *yin-yang* alternation, become fragmentation; cosmopolitanism might be charged with the propagation of privileged elitism. How is it, then, that greater caution has not been exercised in the way in which societies and their governments deal with the rise of globalization? Malaysia, for one, did impose currency controls, and hence an impediment to free flows of capital, but on the whole globalization is an untethered 'beast'.<sup>67</sup>

Hooper helps answer this question when she identifies the propagandistic dimension to globalization. After examining the content of *The Economist*, from 1989 to 1996, she argues that globalization has been presented 'as a glamorous process at the cutting edge of progressive capitalist development'.<sup>68</sup> Her study reveals a certain masculinity about globalisation. This is not a traditional patriarchy but a 'sexy, sci-fi' masculinity (in a world of technology, business, speed) which treats 'the whole globe as its playground'.<sup>69</sup> Such an image of globalization must appear attractive to those in the so-called Business Class economy.<sup>70</sup> If globalization is viewed as a trend, then there will be those who will seek to exploit it, as exemplified by Naisbitt<sup>71</sup> who is probably the USA's best-known 'trend-chaser'. The danger inherent in this approach, however, is that trend-chasing amounts to 'worshipping the conqueror of the present moment',<sup>72</sup> rather than reflecting on the conqueror's credentials.

A more critical approach to the globalization 'trend' has in fact begun. It was proclaimed most graphically by the 'Battle for Seattle' anti-globalization protest of 1999. Though more like a millenarian movement than a systematic critique, it nonetheless opened debate on the merits and demerits of globalization to the broader public. With a sharpening competition between philosophies of *globalization-from-above*, which is seen as exclusionary and elitist, versus *globalization-from-below*

<sup>65</sup> M. Latham, 'Let's Rattle the Cage of Insider Power', *The Australian*, 21 November 2002, p. 11

<sup>66</sup> A. Nandy, 'The Beautiful, Expanding Future of Poverty: Popular Economics as a Psychological Defense', (2002) Vol. 4, No. 2 *International Studies Review*, p. 107

<sup>67</sup> Or, as Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, refers to its financial dimension, the 'Electronic Herd'. He uses the term to describe the stampede of which the global marketplace is capable. The Electronic Herd consists of 'often anonymous stock, bond, currency and multinational investors, connected by screens and networks' (p. 94).

<sup>68</sup> C. Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2001), p. 158

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 193. See also the book review of Hooper: M. Zalewski, 'Old Wine in New Bottles?' (2002) Vol. 4, No. 1 *International Studies Review* 161-165

<sup>70</sup> A term used in Indian business circles to differentiate the privileged economic elite from the 'Bike Economy' (the rising middle class who can afford a motorcycle but not a car), and the vast majority of the population who exist in the 'Bullock Economy' (they rely on bullocks and not bikes). *Asia Business Report*, BBC World News, 26 November 2002

<sup>71</sup> J. Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*, 2nd edn (Warner Books, New York, 1984); J. Naisbitt, *Megatrends Asia: The Eight Asian Megatrends that are Changing the World* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, 1995)

<sup>72</sup> Max Dublin, *Futurehype* (Viking, Markham, Ontario, 1989), p. 5

which promises to be more participatory, the world's security in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century now seems to rest on the 'clash of globalizations',<sup>73</sup> overtaking Huntington's late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'clash of civilizations'<sup>74</sup> thesis. Dialectically speaking, it would not be unrealistic to expect the clash of globalizations to yield to a switch in civilizational mandalas for the purpose of harmonizing the two extremities. Eschewing the adversarial politics of street marches versus international financial institutions in favour of a syncretic system of accommodation, the global potter might appear once again in the *agora*.

Here China, with its growing economic and political influence, has a conceptual contribution to the Greek foundations of Western participatory politics. Of particular interest is the Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi's approach of *liang xing*,<sup>75</sup> meaning to follow two courses simultaneously. This has been applied to the PRC's own policy of 'one country' (China), 'two systems' (socialism and capitalism) that led to the successful reunification of socialist China with capitalist Hong Kong and Macao, as well as the establishment of capitalist zones within the mainland itself. Such a *liang xing* logic accords with the *yin-yang* principle of interpenetrating polarities. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would never have survived to its 16<sup>th</sup> Congress in November 2002 had it not invoked market economics to enrich the nation. Indeed, capitalists are now permitted to join the CCP.<sup>76</sup> Similar dynamics may be found in the family-based business traditions using new technology - for example, internet cafes in family homes. This process is also underway in another Socialist Confucian state, Vietnam, whose *doi moi* or *renovation* policy is yielding results reflective of China's. Vietnam, like the other ASEAN states, comprised the wider Chinese tribute-trade system which, as has been noted above, is now reimagining itself through an ASEAN-China regionalism.

## Conclusion: The World City

That trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be shaped by the diversity of styles and meanings emerging out of localizations in the global *mandala* is incontrovertible. The world will see a wider presence of cultural market niches, particularly in the form of fusions between traditions and across the postmodern, modern and the traditional spectrum. What is not so clear is whether this diversity will inform a more compassionate potter than the one which is currently feared. Here is where the role of governments and governance are needed if exploitation is to be curtailed. Without mechanisms of self-monitoring, even the winners in the global game will lose. In the wider world of concerted civic efforts, cultural resources abound. For every Islamic extremist a Sufi may be found, for all of Washington's unilateralism it must operate in a multipolar world of multilateral thought. The integrative properties of globalization describe the global city with its square. Herein lies the opportunity to create, in Dallmayr's words, 'the required democratization of the global structure itself, that is, the need to render

<sup>73</sup> S. Gill, 'Constitutionalizing Inequality and the Clash of Globalizations' (2002) Vol. 4, No. 2 *International Studies Review* 20pp.

<sup>74</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996)

<sup>75</sup> *Chuang-Tsu [Zhuangzi]*, trans. Fung Yu-lan (Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1989). See M. Lu and R. Dellios, ' "One Culture, Two Systems": A Cultural Approach to Inter-Chinese Politics' (1998) Vol. 3, No. 1 *The Culture Mandala*, 22pp.

<sup>76</sup> C. Armitage, 'Jiang Pushes Accelerated Market Reform', *The Weekend Australian*, 9-10 November 2002, p. 9



global power legitimate and hence to hold global hegemony democratically accountable'.<sup>77</sup> Beyond the global city lies the circle of the environmental life-support system that infuses the Centre with a *yin-yang* process of 'world making'. This, in turn, depends on diversified as well as concerted human action.

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<sup>77</sup> Dallmayr, 'Globalization and Inequality', 153