

10-11-2002

Thinking About Thinking in an Era of Globalization: Implications for International Security

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2002) "Thinking About Thinking in an Era of Globalization: Implications for International Security," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 13 : Iss. 10 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol13/iss10/2>

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Title: Thinking About Thinking in an Era of Globalization: Implications for International Security

Author: Editor

Volume: 13

Issue: 10

Date: 2002-10-11

Keywords: Globalization, Military, Thought, Violence

Abstract. This article identifies and critiques hypotheses concerning the impact of globalization on thinking and suggests consequences of thinking (reason, logic) as an epistemological tool of international security.

We live in an era of globalization. Or so many self-professed and other-professed experts assert to us and to each other, and so many of us assert to others and to ourselves. Or, perhaps, the experts cease asserting the assertion to us and to themselves, because they may believe that the assertion no longer requires asserting. Instead, what was once a premise, assumption, hypothesis, or opinion has even transcended belief to become an incontrovertible fact.

That globalization has become an incontrovertible fact might be surprising given that the very construct of globalization seems to be associated with many denotations - some interdependent, some orthogonal, some partially or totally contradictory. Nevertheless, globalization is being presented as a phenomenon that can, and in all likelihood does, have consequences. In other words, there are myriad causal attributions wherein the antecedent globalization impels numerous subsequent phenomena. One class of consequences relates to new thinking or a new thinking rampant in a new world.

The story proceeds as follows. Globalization may affect what we think. Or how we think. Or when, why, and where we think. Globalization also may affect the certainty which might be applied to any thought before, during, or after it is thought. This notion of affecting certainty seems to have extremely significant implications for the application of military force to the resolution of political conflict and for the recognition and resolution of other security issues.

Many espousers of military resolution of political conflict assert that a significant degree of certainty must be arrived at so as to establish the ontological validity of the rationale for the application of military force. This rationale might comprise examples of misbehavior engaged in by the target of impending military force - misbehavior that somehow deserves to be punished, further deterred, or subject to extinction (the target thereby being rehabilitated or literally or figuratively removed) because of that misbehavior's essential makeup and/or noxious behavioral consequences.

Another rationale for the application of military force might comprise assumed consequences of the application of military force that may be desirable to the military initiator, regardless of the essence or behavioral consequences of the target of military force antecedent to the application of force. (A third kind of rationale - that the application of military force in and of itself is pleasurable and desirable regardless of specific, alleged essential constituents or misbehaviors of others or other consequences for the military initiator - does not depend on the certainty of rationale, may even be psychologically mindless, and will not further be addressed in this article.)

Globalization, in so far as it affects certainty, might, therefore, be assumed to have an impact on the frequency and intensity of application of military force. As certainty for rationales of the application of military force decreases, so might the attendant frequency and intensity of force. As certainty

increased, so, too, might force frequency and intensity. Yet in a world wherein one might have to consider a globalization-caused or globalization-mediated certainty that may not be certain and an uncertainty that may be certain, i.e., an implosion of certainty for any favored epistemological pathway, the consequences for the rationales linked to the application of military force might be unknowable. In fact, a frenzy of self-assessments of one's cognitive processes and cognitions might lead to an ambivalence worthy of Hamlet. Or such a frenzy might induce an omnipresent and polymorphous activation of military force in the terror of believing one knows nothing certain. Terms such as paranoia, psychopathy, sociopathy, right, and wrong would take on new meanings, all meanings, and no meanings.

So, in Jerusalem, Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader in the West Bank, is on trial on charges of terrorism. Some observers claim that his trial, if it ends with a conviction and just punishment, will have a deterrent effect on future acts of military and paramilitary violence (including acts of terrorism) by various Palestinian individuals and factions. Some observers claim that his trial, if it continues to allow him to voice the needs and aspirations of an oppressed Palestinian people, will induce further acts of military and paramilitary violence (including acts of terrorism) by these same individuals and factions or will decrease the number of such acts through a collective catharsis induced by his voice. Other observers claim that the Israeli government is purposely staging the trial to provide Barghouti's voice maximum exposure, because the government considers him to be a preferred (by the government) future leader of the Palestinians--a leader who, ultimately, would help reduce Palestinian violence. Still other observers claim that other Palestinian individuals and factions espousing and implementing military and paramilitary violence (including acts of terrorism) are on to the alleged Israeli government's strategy and are marking Barghouti as a future target of violence. And there are Israeli citizens who have suffered the injury and loss of loved ones through Palestinian violence and who are being incited by the trial to mark Barghouti as a target of violence. All significant competing certainties.

So, in Washington, DC, there is much consternation about whether elements of the Intelligence Community are being comprehensive and forthright in their provision of intelligence to various investigative and oversight Congressional committees. There is even more consternation about whether the Intelligence Community in toto or elementally is providing intelligence free of the influence of policy advocacy or coercion.

Yet, the very notions of being comprehensive, forthright, and policy-free are abstractions with individual and multiple meanings and interpretations as experienced by people as they construct and perceived the world. Complexities include the essence of intelligence collection and analysis related to knowing what to leave out. Other complexities include the essence of intelligence as a necessary precursor for action and non-action as mediated by some subsequent and systematic appraisal often termed policy development. Again, significant competing complexities.

So, throughout the United States (US), alleged sleeper cells of terrorists are being rolled up before the cells attack from within. These cells are being perceptually constructed and identified through epistemologies - largely of deductive and inductive logic, faith, and authority - that are easily susceptible to multiple interpretations. So, the possession of a document that defends suicide attacks as a legitimate tactic brands the possessor as a sleeper suicide terrorist. So do possession of box cutters, aviation training, anti-US remarks, trips to Southwest Asia, and praying at a mosque and associating with people under surveillance or identified as sleepers. That such people are sleepers who have been rolled up early on as opposed to victims of inductive logic fallacies may be as unknowable as resolving when

we are asleep and when we are awake when we think we are asleep and when we are awake. Again, significant competing complexities.

So, on universities throughout the US, notions of one-sidedness, bias, and fairness are being constructed and deconstructed around human rights violations and anti-Semitism. Disinvestments from Israeli commercial assets and boycotts against Israeli researchers and research collaborations are advanced as exemplifications of lofty principle - Good against Evil, with Evil constituted by Israeli counterterrorist techniques and military and civilian presence in the West Bank and Gaza. Disinvestments and boycotts also are advanced as exemplifications of lofty principle, but as Evil against Good with Evil constituted by Palestinian terrorist techniques. Again, significant competing complexities.

So, in public discourse on global health and security, the AIDS pandemic is conceived as divine retribution for unholy behavior. Or as a contemporary challenge to the adaptiveness of male copulatory behavior with multiple female partners, an adaptiveness that might be supported by variants of evolutionary theory. Or as an exemplification of the politics of the international pharmaceutical industry. Or as an exemplification that all politics is not only local but personal. Again, significant competing complexities.

And now, full circle, what is the impact of globalization on the certainty of thinking and the thinking of certainty? That globalization facilitates contact with multiple narratives might be easier to defend. However, such contact may both facilitate and impede certainty. In the former case, one might be more likely to defend against other narratives through time-honored psychological strategies such as cognitive dissonance, self-perception, self-justification, a host of satisficing cognitive heuristics, and the activation of psychodynamic conflict. In the latter case, one might be continuously overwhelmed by narratives and mired in a socially constructive quicksand with little chance of being saved. In fact, that certainty about the consequences of globalization for certainty is uncertain may be an outgrowth of globalization or, instead, a timeless manifestation of the psychology of human intellectual, social, and personal history. (See AIDS as a threat to global security. The New York Times, p. A28; Bennet, J. (October 4, 2002). Palestinian urges defiance; Plan to grab Arafat reported. The New York Times, p. A10; Kifner, J. (October 4, 2002). U.S. seeks to use papers on Islam as evidence. The New York Times, p. A15; Lewin, T. (October 4, 2002). Tolerance plea is stirring contention. The New York Times, p. A16; Lewis, N.A. (October 4, 2002). Senator insists C.I.A. is harboring Iraq reports. The New York Times, p. A12; Lichtblau, E. (October 5, 2002). 4 in U.S. charged in post-9/11 plan to join Al Qaeda. The New York Times, pp. A1, A11.) (Keywords: Globalization, Military, Thought, Violence.)