

Global Knowledge Structure, International Political Economy And Justice Media And Information Warfare International Conference: A Global Challenge In The 21st Century (M-i-war2007)

Yuslinda Mat Yassin, Munis Paran

As the 21st century is in its first decade, it appears that the “centre cannot hold” and “things are falling apart”. The world is full of inequities. The notion of sovereignty of state is becoming untenable. The world is dominated by one super power with overwhelming political, economic, military and cultural superiority. About forty transnational industrial and media conglomerates dominate the economies and resources of the global with impunity, being answerable, generally to no one. Eight or nine well developed economies are getting more than a fair deal from the world economy. About 25 middle level, well-developed states are quite capable of drawing policies for a comfortable future.

The rest of the states of the world, about 160 or so are not in a position to plan for a better future. In fact some of the states’ future itself are in jeopardy. “Most of the poor one billion people are in 50 countries, 70% of them in Africa and most of the rest in central Asia. Some developing states are growing. Most of the developing states are confronted with wars, and misuse of natural resources. Some are land locked with no access to the outside world. A few are under the rule of kleptocracy and plutocracy.

Prevailing inequities among nation-states of the world could be attributed to the prevailing structure of global knowledge.

The two great events of modern history, Renaissance and Reformation and the earlier Medieval Period laid the foundation for the structure of knowledge that was to dominate the future political,

economic and social philosophies of the world. The philosophy of rationalism and a prior knowledge, generally gave way to knowledge built on empiricism.

The birth of sovereign nation-state (Treaty of Westphalia, 1648) and the flowering of knowledge based on ethics, justice and empiricism opened the doors to the era of Discovery: colonialism and imperialism.

European states, because of their hold on science and technology, fought among themselves for land, resources and markets, paying little or no regards to the interests of natives.

Feudalism, mercantilism, capitalism socialism, communism, Nazism and the various versions of fascism were economic systems born out of the desire of European states to establish national and international political order in their favor.

During the centuries of conflicts (including wars) among western states, it was the Asian-African lands which suffered most. Lands in Asia and Africa were occupied by Western powers at their whims and fancies.

International law operating during the days of colonialism and imperialism favored the waeteners. World Wars (first and second) were fought to restructure political, economic and social order of the world.

Asian knowledge on science and technology from 15th century onwards was no match for the knowledge produces in Europe. Colonized lands had little or no opportunity to learn modern thoughts on governance. Access to education was limited. Nationalism was not encouraged. Sometimes it was put down brutally.

The paradigm governing international political and economic order began to shift in the post Second World War era. Japan had escaped Western colonialism by revolting against its own past. It was the Japanese elites, learning from European and American structure of knowledge that preserved the territorial and political integrity of Japan.

Japanese devoured books and magazine on western science and technology, education and the art of governance. They believed that the strength of the Western states came from the existence of strong central government, industrialization,, education emphasizing science and technology and arts. And the Japanese learnt and prospered adapting themselves to the features of western civilization.

Japan became a role model for other countries in Asia and Africa. Nations attempting to mould their states on Japan did not succeed for the simple reason that most of these states (upon achieving independence)

were not as homogeneous as Japan. Japan had gone through remarkable stages in historical experience (in political, economic and social arenas) from the early days of the shogun at government.

China, India and other nations in Asia and Africa had their own problems: multiethnicity, regional nationalism, absolutely no foundation for the growth of science and technology.

Lack of democratic traditions, inadequate knowledge on proper governance, low literacy rate among the ordinary people, tribal, religious, linguistic and regional conflicts have hampered the progress of the developing states in the fields of politics and economy.

The most obvious question facing the nation-states in the developing world is: should they establish a viable political system before they could execute an effective economic order? Or should they ensure economic prosperity before they could create an acceptable democratic system of government. Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand opted for the former. Malaysia during its initial stages, India and Indonesia opted for the latter approach.

The nation-states of Asia and Africa did not face common problems while attempting to achieve a justice-based society. Different states faced different problems because of differing historical, geographical, ethnic and social factors.

However, the following remedies are deemed appropriate to create a better civil society.

1. Absolute eradication of corruption – the mother of all evils
2. Democratic governance.
3. Upholding constitutionalism.
4. Adhering to the rule of law.
5. Creating a zone of peace – and advocating a policy of disarmament
6. Avoiding excessive integration into the global economy, at least for a while.
7. Retrain from building meaningless mega projects. This is where the source of corruption lies.

A just international political and economic order can only be created if all sovereign states are given their due. How do we arrive at this noble stage? Developing nations can ponder on major social and political

philosophers like Rawls, Nozick and other in order to create a utopia of some sort. The answer for a better society lies in the ability to listen to opposing views. Rigid, one-way-closed thinking, generally adopted in most of the developing states, is a recipe for total failure.

Yuslinda Mat Yassin

Munis Paran

Faculty Of Communication And Media Studies,

Uitm, Shah Alam, 45000 Selangor