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Globalism should be without hegemony

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THEREFORE, it could be concluded that the economic globalisation as espoused at Bretton Woods was very much related to the security and the culture of free market, with the United States providing their definition as bulwarks against the anti-Free Market System elements. The Free Market world became the spokes of the US hub.

The success of globalisation of Free Market World flourished in the ambience of the Cold War between the US-led Free Market World and the centrally-controlled Soviet Union, China and their satellites who were the communist system promoters in the Pacific region.

Security and economics were webbed. The priority of the US during the Cold War with Soviet Union was to make as many as possible friends, allies and anti-communist peoples even at the expense of the American economy. Competitive market was not an issue so long as more and more peoples were adhering to the culture of the free marketeers.

The communist world led by the late Soviet Union and China must be isolated. However, after the demise of the Soviet Union this is no longer a priority. The new priority is in the competition for the world market.

The reality now is that the prosperity of the US is being threatened by the competitive products of Asia. Already the system of fixed exchange rates and convertibility of dollars into gold had been destroyed, which weakened the Bretton Woods system of one world of the free market.

However, the floating-rate remains, which helps to cushion the stress brought about by the oil shocks, the West Asian troubles and the breaking of the Berlin Wall. Bretton Woods nevertheless could not bring back the kind of discipline as envisioned in 1944 pertaining to a single global system.

It seems there is an effort to make the US government-controlled cybernetic hub as the only nucleus backbone ring thus retaining the dominance of the US role in the world system of security and market. This system has its genesis in the US Local Area Network and Coordinated US-wide system through secure telephone lines linking all Local Area Network via bridges to a single host.

This network includes all US military assets and resources including satellites and all are subordinated to the central host which rendered easier management and coordination for defence purposes during the Cold War.

Its usefulness in the Cold War would include intelligence gathering as well as information or disinformation dissemination or digitally controlled cyberware offence or defence systems.

Now that the Cold War between Washington and Moscow is over, the system including its host is offered as the hub firstly to all US business and then to others, again on the cultural and ideological basis of the Free Market System world as one to be the world standard Internet Protocol between remotes in different countries.

In other words the former military host is now being operated as the hub for the spokes and the hub now has the potential role of controlling both military and commercial information technology in the world connected to it, on an efficient and centralised basis.

This is intrusion and could weaken adversaries, commercial or military. If a nation is entirely dependent on one hub alone it is extremely comfortable in an ambience of amiability and likemindedness but is

otherwise highly dangerous. Whatever the word is used or arguments tossed the dependency on the sole information structure or a single hub controlled only by one power is undemocratic and extremely undesirable and should be avoided unless there is a universal acceptability of a jointly-controlled single hub.

An International Advisory Panel will not serve the purpose of democracy unless the advice is mandatorily accepted. The hub under a single-power control is the Orwellian big brother, if you will, and all the spokes of the hub by definition become dependent on its information disseminates. That is the meaning of globalisation in this context.

Since speed is the essence of today's economic and commercial activities, there is no way the Information Technology (IT) challenges could be faxed or responded in the old fashion way. It is no longer possible to separate the Foreign Policy of a country from its Economic Policy. Hence there is a great need for speedy multimedia corridor, for speedy communication and adaptability which only the IT could efficiently and efficaciously provide. And to be active in world industry and trade there is no alternative to IT without which the industrialised world would always have an edge over the struggling developing peoples and the least developed countries (LDC).

The LDC or even a large community in a developing country could be marginalised by the speed of modernisation with the danger of their becoming barbarians like the Mongols who ransacked Baghdad and destroyed valuable books because they did not understand what books and knowledge were all about.

It must be fully realised that there is no desire on the part of the developing world and the LDC's to be the political, cultural and economic minions of the single power controlled hub. If we were linked solely to this so-called hub because we believe that there is only one world and one hub, then we shall be entirely at the mercy of the central hub. Should we begin to be out of favour economically, politically or otherwise, we may find our IT frozen or a computer virus running amok for a few days; and all our economic activities will come to a grinding halt. To accept the theory of a single world with an undemocratically controlled single hub world is to put our necks in that kind of a noose.

For the moment, there does not appear to be any protection system other than to create Information Loops making us free from being hooked on only to a single hub. In other words, it is to get out of the potentially hegemonic clutches of the single hub. Let us not forget that information is knowledge and knowledge power now controlled by a single great power. What dire consequence would emerge should that power forget the POWER that made it great and all ethics thrown to the winds. Therefore a system has to be devised (if not at yet done) and this could only be achieved if we did something ourselves instead of relying on something we might get from the market.

For each Asean member, it is not economically feasible to have a loop solely for one country only. But developing countries in the EAEC region including South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives), could get together in a Mutual Information Communication System (MISC - for want of an agreed name) with the aim of creating an Asian Loop. There is already an effort by China and some parties in Japan to think about this problem as witnessed in a conference which took place recently in Tokyo in November 1996. This conference might have been regarded by some as a cybermaverick move and should be looked upon with disfavour. And certainly we should likewise do so of the control if the Asian hub was to be in the hands of one power only.

MICS should be run on a democratic grouping with a shared power system.

In other words, the management should be in the hands of all participants devoid of hegemonism. Independent operators within the region should serve on a technical consultative body and they are among equals. There should be a MICS mixed personnel to staff the secretariat and attached to it is a body of research and development (R&D) personnel of the highest calibre and qualification to fuel a quantum leap in the techtronic endeavours. Thus there would be no single power to control the Asian MICS.

When globalisation is examined in this context it becomes clear that the call of one world is a make-belief that the dependency on a single hub is inevitable. The new world of the post Washington-Moscow Cold War is not as yet a single world. Many peoples still believe in the centrally-controlled economy and many still practise it as many have become disillusioned with the promises of the free-market system. Some have found that the free market system also brings with it all the scourges and stresses of the system with which they are in no position to grapple.

There is a very strenuous effort targeting Cuba or China or Myanmar and some other countries with the hope of changing the peoples there to accept the culture of the industrialised world of the Free Marketeers with all its exploitative ugliness. Prime Minister Dr Mahathir is always seeking a democratic world culture to make the next millennium as the era of a united world not just only of Asia or Europe or America. As against that, one could detect that there are forces who espouse the one world culture as undemocratically defined. They even foretell that there would be a clash or war between cultures and civilisations. Some say that there would be a clash of values between the West and the East. There may be clashes of values and cultures but between the individualistic culture on "I" of the developed countries and that of the developing and LDC whose main emphasis is communitarianism or "we".

In its final analysis there is no global village which pre-supposes shared values but a cluster of villages with their own respective cultural beliefs, ethics and ways. The world is still fragmented in regionalism transcending borders created by imperialism. The only activity which may be regarded as global had been in trade even at the time when some people still thought of the world as flat. The acrimony was over trade routes rather than itself. There was one world of trade even if it had its share of modern unethical prejudices and practices of Persian market haggling and anti-Semitism as exemplified in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. There were silk and spice routes. International power game was once played by emperors and despots and the prizes were booties, control of trade routes, dominion over land and sea and slavery. For that the instruments of conquest were the swords and guns which drove fear into the hearts of men. Now the prize is market and in this cyberspace the instrument is the IT to capture hearts and minds and to intimidate them if and when necessary. There are now conditionalities to trade and labour and they may be issues in the future for threats and use of cyberwar if the edges of conflict were not blunted by ethical principles.

It may not be possible to escape entirely from the singly controlled power but at least MICS would maintain independence and protection by providing system alternatives and a buffer, a way to mitigate cyber congestion which may result in blackouts and disappearance of data into the cyberspace. And above all the MICS would not be a single government - controlled but shared among its members.

Regional MICS should be set up in Asia and the Pacific Island countries, Africa and South American and then link themselves up in a web collaborative network using satellites and then link it to the US hub to bring about the one world approach to trade without any odium of political or cultural hegemony. And if the concept of MICS is unacceptable or

impractical and no protection system is available then I shudder to think of the alternatives. I could only hazard a guess, that it would be either a complete submission to the will of the single hub or to glorify our own cyberpunks, hackers and virus designers as cyberwarriors so that the world will be forewarned that we have the capacity to retaliate if our freedom, dignity or sovereignty is in any way undermined. Such moves would certainly run counter to ethics. In a cyberwar the role of the military is minimal not at all like the Charge of the Light Brigade.

As if en passant I mentioned cybercongestion. The reality of the situation is that this year will double the approximately 40 million net users of last year. The people or power or the government who control the central hub must know its capacity and will take prevention and remedial measures against cyberfatigue. These measures may take the form of a very expensive research and development and invention which could transmit data at the rate of billion bits per second or to create an economic model with a new calculus to reduce users by classifying "priority" transmissions at high categorised prices. In any case there will be an increase in the usage pricing which may be unreachable to developing and LDC's. That could be a cause of friction and a casus belli. However, what is the role of the military in this situation? None, I should say. The only possible role of the military in any country is when the marginalised community might turn barbaric. The question is will the government of that country use the military to quell the boiling heat of the populace. I don't think so other peoples would look askance at the government which should be aware that through its own fit of absentmindedness this unsatisfactory situation has emerged.

Let us at this juncture understand the concept of globalisation would only create dissensions and strifes. Globalism should be meaningfully democratic based on collaborative ethical ideals of human sharing power, fate and destiny, where through Ethical Armament Education there would no longer be threats of use of force and acts of terror thus altering the roles of the military and the police. At least for now, the ASEAN way would eradicate the warlike and terroristic roles of the military. Is there a proper response to the challenge of hegemonism or its threat using cyberweaponry? Is there also an appropriate arrangement for a section of the people in a country not to be marginalised or alienated from the mainstream of modernisation by a small cybernetically educated group? To both questions, the only appropriate response in my view is a global ethical armament.

Whither Military?

* This is the second and concluding part of an article by Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie.

* The above are extracts of a speech by former Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie at the Regional Ethics in Leadership Conference organised by the St James Ethics Centre (Sydney, Australia) and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia in Penang recently.

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