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"The Asian Dimension under the New World Order"  
- Evolving Paradigms in Asia and Japan

I would like to thank the Institute for International Policy Studies for inviting me to speak at this 15th Anniversary Symposium of the institute. I hope I can do justice to the subject "The Asian Dimension under the New World Order". Asia is obviously set to play a bigger role in world affairs. But Asia is a very big continent and it is not as evenly developed as Europe. Nor are the people ethnically or culturally similar. Only one country in Asia is developed and that is Japan. South Korea and China are fast moving up but South East Asia and the Indian sub-continent are behind China and Korea. The other countries of Asia, i.e. Central and West Asia, have not really made much progress.

2. Consequently Asia cannot present itself as a single entity with common stands on international issues.

3. Besides at the moment Asians are not psychologically prepared to play their role in international affairs. They still tend to defer to the Europeans. Perhaps this is a relic of the old European domination of Asia.

4. Here I would like to explain that by European I mean people of European extraction whether they now call themselves Americans, Canadians, Australians or New Zealanders. They may be living outside of Europe but culturally they are Europeans and they tend to close ranks when faced with challenges by non-Europeans.

5. The tie is not just ethnic but also religious, for Europeans, nominally at least are Christians and as

Christians their old enmity towards Islam in particular still colour their thinking. They were at one time more anti-Jew or anti-Semitic. But horrified by the Holocaust they now bend over backwards in order to atone for their crimes. Such is their about turn that they are willing to tolerate the crimes committed by Israel.

6. If Asia is to play a role in shaping the New World Order, the first thing that it must do is to rid itself of its historical baggage. Perhaps Asians should remind themselves that they were civilised long before the Europeans emerged from their caves.

7. In history we find many instances when backward people managed to catch up and then outstrip the more developed ones. The Europeans achieved this. But by the same token Asians can catch up with the Europeans, and take their rightful place on the world stage.

8. At the moment ideas, values and systems which have been accepted by the world are of European origin. They claim that their values are in fact universal values and that there is no such thing as Asian values. If there are then they must be wrong or inferior. And so today's universal values are basically European.

9. The nation state is a European concept, along with ideas about human rights, freedom and democracy. And now we have to accept borderlessness and globalisation which effectively denies the independence of nations. And Asia does not protest.

10. Although it is seemingly a reversal of European thinking, it can be just a ploy to break down the barriers to their exploitation of the wealth of the entities created by their idea of nation states, independence and freedom. They themselves would remain very much nation states by other means.

11. Asians have never reversed a concept promoted by the Europeans. They would feel guilty of not acceding to universally accepted values and ideas as propounded by European propaganda. And yet when the Europeans apparently reversed their ideas Asians feel bound to accept them.

12. It would seem that Asians are not merely bereft of ideas but they suffer from a mind block which prevents them from critically examining whatever thoughts emanate from the Europeans and when necessary reject them. They would not be able to reject the nation state in favour of globalisation if it had not been initiated by the Europeans.

13. Some of the ideas coming from the Europeans are

obviously harmful. Market liberalisation and deregulation are among them.

14. The world's economy was growing quite well before the idea of liberalisation and deregulations in a borderless world was mooted. Indeed Japan's rapid recovery and the growth of Korea and Southeast Asia owed nothing to trade liberalisation and the "rule-based" trading of the free market. (Here I would like to point out that a free market with rule-based trading are contradictions in terms). Of course there were faults in the old system of international trade. But must the answer be total free trade and the removal of national boundaries. Cannot there be something less extreme?

15. But Asians did not question the idea of free trade and the accompanying changes. We not only accepted them but many ardently believe that they are good in themselves. Even after their prosperous economies were being destroyed by this regime, they have not altered their commitment.

16. But most of the European countries reject free trade when it hurts them. They did not hesitate to bail out their hedge funds, automobile industries and airlines. And their farming is strongly protected. At the slightest threat they would impose countervailing duties and other non-tariff barriers.

17. Transparency is vigorously advocated in all business dealings. But hedge funds whose dealings are far bigger than the value of total world trade, need not be transparent. And yet these funds can cause great harm to the economy of countries and of whole regions.

18. It is clear that the systems and regimes promoted by the Europeans are not binding upon them. It is clear also that they have no hesitation in ignoring their own paradigms if it suits them. Yet Asians still maintain their faith in those European initiated ideas even if they suffer continuously from them.

19. If Asia wants to play a role in the determination of a new world order it is necessary that it learns to be more critical of ideas and concepts coming out of the West. If it cannot do this then it is most unlikely to play a meaningful role in the shaping of a New World Order.

20. The Japanese people have been accused of being copycats. They used to produce inferior imitations of European products. After the end of the Pacific War Japan decided to produce high quality products while maintaining low prices. Japan succeeded admirably.

But it was still considered a copycat nation.

21. Change of course can be for the good or for the worse. When Japan decided to modernise it also adopted the wrong European values. Coming out of isolation you decided to acquire an empire through conquest. You now sincerely regret that wrong decision. But is there a need to go into reverse gear and reject a role in Asia? It is obvious that if Japan wishes to play a role together with other leading Asian countries, Japan's contribution would be immense.

22. The approach to be adopted by Asia need not be that of the Europeans. We need not conquer or dominate in order to have our values and ideas accepted. Japan's formula for success has prompted other countries in Asia to adopt it of their own free will.

23. There have been many good ideas coming out of the West. But the Europeans have time and again been proven wrong. That is why the Europeans have discarded them in favour of new ones.

24. Let us examine their ideologies. Their absolute monarchies which created many of their empires gave way to republicanism which was claimed to be the most perfect system to govern human society. They shouted "Liberte, Egalite and Fraternite" even as they massacred the aristocrats. Then there was the ascendancy of the capitalists during the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of their empires. But the excesses of capitalism lead to socialism and the Communist ideology. These ideologies were supposed to create heaven on earth, but after only 70 years they changed their minds and discarded these egalitarian ideas.

25. Now capitalism is back with a vengeance. Liberalisation, deregulation, free trade, borderless world, transparency, etc are all the products of domineering capitalism.

26. Nothing must stop capitalism. Just as General Motors, once claimed that what was good for General Motors was good for the United States, now we are being told that what is good for Capitalism will be good for the world. No one should challenge Capitalism.

27. But history has shown repeatedly that ideologies go through a cycle; appearing, fighting resistance, succeeding and becoming popular (usually at huge cost in human lives) and then failing to deliver and to be discredited. Finally they are condemned and discarded.

28. There is no reason why the present manifestation of capitalism and even democracy should not go through

the same cycle. The point that has to be made is that all ideologies, formulas or systems are imperfect. They will fail eventually. They will fail because of the excesses of those who practice them. And we are now seeing excesses and excessive zeal in the promotion of capitalism and democracy.

29. But should we wait for them to fail at tremendous cost to the world community or should we now critically examine these ideas with a new to modifying or replacing them.

30. It is in this process that Asians can contribute. Asians have their own ways. We should not try to impose our way as the Europeans like to do. We should devise our own systems and prove their goodness by applying them to ourselves first. If we are successful then others will follow. If we fail then we should be prepared to modify or reject. We must never be so fanatical about our own creations that even when we fail or we get bad results we continue to insist on upholding them. Results are far more important than ideologies or systems.

31. We may feel lonely sometime as we flounder about and meet violent oppositions. But there is no perfect system. We must never be trapped into accepting all and every interpretation of the initial ideas or systems. On the other hand we must be willing to lend our ears to adverse comments and criticisms in order to improve on the original idea. It is not impossible for Asians to accept and blend their ideas with those of the Europeans and others. The result would still reflect Asian inputs, Asian contribution to a New World New Order.

32. The world order of today, as conceived by the European is largely for the Europeans. The new world order devised by all the peoples of the world must benefit everyone in the world.

33. In this New World Order created by everyone for everyone the uneven distribution of wealth would be less likely.

34. In a modern country it is accepted that the rich must pay taxes in order to be redistributed also to the poor. Globalisation has effectively made the whole world into one single country. Is it not right that the rich countries should contribute to the development of the poor countries?

35. The rich had undertaken to contribute 0.7 of their GDP to aid the poor. Nearly all of them have reneged on their promise. And so the poor have remained poor.

36. They, the poor, should of course not believe that the world owes them a living. But on the other hand, if the rich became rich by exploiting the poor either directly or indirectly, it is fair that the rich help raise the poor from their debilitating poverty.

37. The rich are right in not wanting the money they contribute to be squandered by inefficient Governments. There is a Chinese saying that when a man begs for food, give him a fishing rod. He will then be free from hunger always.

38. So give a fishing rod to the poor countries by building for them the necessary infrastructures so they may export their products and import their needs at reasonable prices. Ports, airports, railways, roads, water supply and electricity, will do this. Even as these are being built, the jobs created would benefit the people. And without doubt that benefit will be self-multiplying.

39. I will admit that this was my proposal at a conference in Boao, China. There was a deafening silence. It is right to advocate the removal of borders so the wealth of a country can be exploited by the rich but to return some of that wealth to the exploited country meets with utter silence.

40. I am not asking that Asians take up my suggestion. But if we want to give an Asian dimension to a New World Order, then it should be away from maximising profits for the already rich but maximising benefits to the poor. There may be other contributions that Asians can make to create a better world. I believe truly that Asians can contribute, positively to the creation of a new world order which redistributes the bounty of this earth in a much more equitable way. That should be the Asian Dimension under the New World Order.