Can We Reinvent International Studies on Southeast Asia for the Post Western World?

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Abstract

At present with the realization that the non-Western world can also give a large contribution towards the present global dynamics and institutional development in the global context, international studies need to add to the discipline the new understanding of the non-Western experience in international politics and how that this phenomenon influences global affairs. In order to holistically understand the non-Western world and its increasing effect on global politics, it is necessary for international studies to transform. A couple of key elements must become a part of the research agenda that will advance the discipline. For example, the nature of violence which often occurs in non-Western nations; the type of markets that occurs, and other realities that require further investigation and will be able to produce much improved detailed narratives about how the non-Western world can influence global politics.

Keywords: international studies must transform; and understand the nature of violence; the type of markets that occurs and other realities in the non-Western world that affect global politics.

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War the Asia-Pacific region draws increased attention but there is a gap between the rich comparative and foreign policy scholarship on China, Japan, and the United States with the wider world of international relations theory. Although Pierre Lizee's work, quoting Stanley Hoffmann, puts forward an argument that international studies as a discipline assumes that it speaks to the nature of politics throughout the entire world (Lizee, 2011: 17) (Hoffman, 1977: 41-60), it is evident that the study of Southeast Asia in particular tends to be under-theorized (Ikenberry & Mastanduno, 2003: 1).

The images, concepts, and theories which underlie international studies as Hoffmann argued, must be recognized for what they are: product of the post-1945 era, when "to study United States foreign policy was to study the international system and to study the international system could not fail to bring one back to the role of the United States" (Hoffman, 1977: 41-60). The nature of American hegemony in the Asia Pacific region when it consolidated after the Second World War is distinctive, multidimensional, and known as the San Francisco System (Calder, 2004: 135-157). There are some main institutional features that needed to be highlighted: (Calder, 2004: 139) a dense network of formal security alliances mainly bilateral, between the United States and the key nations of the Pacific; a hub-and-spoke network of bilateral ties radiating from Washington, apart from ANZUS, the San Francisco

System did not create a multilateral security structure; it is a highly asymmetrical structure, in both economic and security dimension, the system offered military protection and economic access to non US participants, while failing to impose analogous collective defense obligations upon them.

Since 1993 multilateralism has slowly emerged to modify the hub-and-spokes bilateral arrangements. APEC (The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) has ventured into some security dimensions, multilateral development bank has been more active, ASEAN Plus Three process began but lingering historical boundaries and complex domestic politics in key nations, make it unclear just how ASEAN Plus Three can ultimately undermine the security elements of the San Francisco System (Calder, 2004: 151). Serious deterrence remains the province of the established bilateral alliances. In addition, unsettled boundaries were a major element of the System within Northeast Asia and helped make Northeast Asia "the Arc of Crisis" that it has been ever since. And the Chinese seemingly insatiable appetite for resources and energy presented environmental challenge and increased the prospects of greater volatility in transpacific alliance relations that necessitate an ability to communicate and renew strategic bargains.

America's unprecedented global power seems to be exercised through a global system of distinctively American design that mirrors the domestic American experience. The game is not imposition, but cooptation, reinforced by America's domination of the global culture, the clout of (its) technological edge and its global military reach. American global supremacy derives from "an elaborate system of alliances and coalitions that literally span the globe, in addition to the global web of specialized organizations, especially the international financial institutions." (Brzezinski, 1997: 24-29) In the post–Cold War era, from 1990 to 2001, US foreign policy was already moving toward a global strategy. The post 9/11 strategy is a continuity of this strategy although there was a profound shift in its goals (Crawford, 2004: 686).

Other intellectual traditions, most notably from the United Kingdom and France have also influenced the evolution of international studies but the field has remained profoundly Western affairs (Lizee, 2011: 1). The concepts which have framed the central claims and debates in the field were drawn from the Western experience (Lizee, 2011: 1). The problems that have constituted the main focus of international studies are the problems of the Western world. (Lizee, 2011: 1)

A Fundamental Shift in World Affairs

Now that the non-Western world contributes to an unprecedented degree to the power dynamics and institutional developments underlying the evolution of global politics, international studies had to bring to the discipline a greater awareness of the non-Western experience of international politics and of how it will affect global affairs.

To understand fully the non-Western world and its growing impact on global politics, then, international studies itself had to change. Numbers of key elements certainly had to become part of the research agenda driving the discipline. The nature of violence, the nature of the state in the non-Western world, the nature of market, and other such realities all had to be studied in more detail in order to produce a

better account of the way in which the non-Western world will influence global politics.

The question posed by Lizee pertains to the following: do international studies have within itself the concepts and theories that allow it to understand the post-Western world? (Lizee, 2011: 3-4) It is obvious that we need to move beyond the all-consuming debate between proponents of a language of universals in the discipline, and proponents of a language of particulars that, in truth, can never be resolved. In this context, the discipline should still aim to speak a language of universals—but one that, along the lines that is more dynamic. The question for our times for international studies: how can we capture, in our explanations of global politics, the changes brought in the varying nature of world affairs by the "rise of the rest"? (Lizee, 2011: 10)

The post-Western literature must address what is specific about the non-Western world, but they must also help in developing concepts that will extend beyond the non-Western world that will be able to explain the character of the whole post-Western world emerging at the moment (Lizee, 2011: 10).

In a world without certainty, or that an absolute set of principles that compels us by their composition to believe in them is impossible, truth can only be obtained by engaging in persuasion dialogue and putting different views in conversation with one another. Political Science and International Studies on Southeast Asia in particular is approaching such a crossroads.

The Challenge in the Search for New Universals in Global Politics

Pierre Lizee argued that there are at least four specific elements that specialists in international studies must focus on if they want to understand better the new global politics emerging as result of the "rise of the rest" (Lizee, 2011: 193-194): the first of these elements concern the nature of violence. Most specialists need to understand fully how violence operates. Lizee deems such study of the zones of violence that exist in the non-Western world and of the likely local, regional, and global responses to these situations (Lizee, 2011).

The second element that must be integrated in international studies if the discipline is to explain the new global politics is the broader understanding of the nature of the state (Lizee, 2011). The way that the state was developed is crucial. The state was often created from the outside, in ways that, to this day, lead to sustained conflicts and tensions, and to the efforts to sustain the state.

The third and fourth elements have to do with democratization and economic development (Lizee, 2011: 1). There have been negotiations of liberal and non-liberal identities. There is also the possibility of the emergence of global capitalism and global political economy that could differ in significant degree from the liberal models that often guide the study of emerging markets.

Earlier, post-realism, point to this circumstance as important, as it identifies the profound limitations and distortions that could occur within the realist perspective that has been constructed through the negation of particular areas of human experience (Beer & Hariman, 1996: 8). It seems appropriate to cite Beer and Hariman that there really is a tremendous need to open up a post-realist space, that is structured less on a rigid opposition between realism and idealism but rather by a sense of radical inclusiveness (Beer & Hariman, 1996: 10). This may be deemed

appropriate in the realm of knowledge production concerning the non-Western world, as post-realism seeks to rectify the limitations and distortions that comes with far too selective an account of the actual determinants of political history, preempting the capacity for action within the varied forms of human collectivities (Beer & Hariman, 1996: 8). Beer and Hariman's views are particularly relevant as they point to a trained incapacity of the realist discourses in assessing processes of modernization, political economy, nationalism and other important determinants in foreign affairs (Beer & Hariman, 1996: 21). Since the September 11 tragedy the concept of post-realism hasn't been developed further.

The realist discourses, when used to investigate political transitions, seem to have seriously underestimated factors such as culturally-shaped skills, habits, and styles that will explain what is distinctive about the behavior of groups and society. Unlike the work of Ann Swidler that describes how bursts of ideological activism may occur when competing ways of organizing action are developing, although more often such movements are not complete cultures because some of their understanding still depends on traditional patterns (Swidler, 1986: 279). In this particular period of cultural transformation, ideology forms around ethos, so it is in concrete situations in which these cultural models are enacted that determine which takes root and which withers (Swidler, 1986: 280).

Ann Swidler views that culture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented. Rather it generally shapes a repertoire or "tool kit," habits, skills, and styles from which people construct "strategies of action." Swidler then develops two models of cultural influence for settled and unsettled periods (Swidler, 1986).

"In settled periods, culture independently influences action, but only by providing resources from which people can construct diverse line of action. In unsettled cultural periods, explicit ideologies directly govern action, but structural opportunities for action determine which among competing ideologies survive in the long run."

Swidler further discusses (Swidler, 1986) the fact that people don't build lines of action from scratch, for example, choosing instead the most efficient means to given ends beginning with some prefabricated links (Swidler, 1986). People tend to construct chains of action beginning with the links that culture shapes and organizes. They will value ends for which their cultural equipment is well suited (Swidler, 1986: 284).

"…a culture has enduring effects on those who hold it, not by shaping the ends they pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action." (Swidler, 1986)

Other scholars have largely acknowledged that since the late 1980s there has been a radical paradigmatic shift in the various fields of humanities and social sciences, i.e. attempts to develop a non-essentialist view of culture. This paradigmatic shift, variously referred to as "post-modern," "post-colonial," "reflexive," etc. also serves as a major impetus for the initiation of this study.

Anthropologists who are inspired by Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Deridda, and Michel de Certeau provide more opportunities to understand the fragility, ambiguities, and historical

ruptures evident in symbolic systems. Pierre Bourdieau and Michel Foucault in particular provide new ways of thinking about culture's relationship to social stratification and power (Weeden, 2002: 713-728). By contrast, an alternative model sees culture not as a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather, it is more like a "tool kit" or repertoire from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action (Swidler, 1986: 273-286).

In the 1990s Samuel Huntington came up with another model that saw culture as a specific group's primordial values and traits, but that clearly is untenable empirically. This group traits version of culture dismissed the diversity of views and experiences of contention within the group under study. By assuming deeply embedded understandings rather than showing their existence, we were constrained in registering transformations in level or fractures in systems of knowledge (Weeden, 2002). Peter J. Katzenstein (Katzenstein, 2010: 5-6) offered a different definition of civilization than that mentioned by Huntington: civilizations are viewed as configurations, constellations, or complexes which are not fixed in space or time; they are both internally, highly differentiated and culturally loosely integrated. Because they are differentiated, civilization transplants selectively. Because they are culturally loosely integrated they generate debate and contestations. And as social constructions of primordiality, civilization can become political reification. They are also weakly institutionalized social orders reflected in and shaped by a variety of practices and processes. They evolve gradually in response to their internal pluralism and their external encounters.

Divergent histories do have different effects on the process of globalization. As we cannot find political, economic, technological, and cultural changes that are proceeding in the same fashion, we may expect unpredictability in the course of ethnic relations. Danilyn Rutherford (Rutherford, 2003) argues that divergent systems of practice may incline certain actors to appropriate global narratives in their own distinctive ways (Rutherford, 2003: 235).

Manuel Castells describes the transnational network society (Castells, 2010), or more specifically, the idea of the weakening of the nation-state, seems to need a more contextualized, empirically grounded, and culturally sensitive analysis. Different historic-cultural, ethnic backgrounds, and emotional perceptions can severely impact any negotiating process or more specifically, histories of nationalism and internal politics can lead to a sense of stubbornness and rigidity against global integration. By contrast, the pursuit of cooperation on a particular functional issue can greatly assist in the creation of a momentum for national identity to be placed in a broader political process, as there will be a clearer understanding of the potential gains that may accrue.

Looking back at Indonesia's history for example, we find Benedict Anderson's view of particular interest as he considers capitalism as enabling the first nationalist movement to flower. Anderson's work describes how imagining the nation arose historically, and in the process enhanced by the convergence of capitalism and print technology (Anderson, 1998). Nationality arose from exile, and that through long-distance transportation and print-capitalist communications, the imagined world of a new displaced person and culture was created (Anderson, 1998: 62-63). Industrial life and the very wealth of industrial capitalism created another sort of exile,

which made people available for nationalism. Young bilinguals often led nationalist movements (Anderson, 1998: 65). From these exiles of sorts, there is the rise of nationalist movements and their variable culmination in successful nation-states as a project for resolution of hybridity.

State-terrains that are bounded and modern, were waiting for their appropriate inhabitants (Anderson, 1998: 65). Colonialism seemed like it dreamed of nationalism before nationalists themselves came into existence (Anderson, 1998: 65). Nation-statehood destroyed both imperial dynastic realms and the even larger colonial-imperialist conglomerations that survived them. It provided a newfound alignment of imagined home and imagined homeowners, and a guarantee of the stabilization of that alignment through both power and economics (Anderson, 1998: 66).

Official nationalism (or when by the late 20th century, nationalism got married to states) developed after the appearances of popular linguistic-nationalism and refracted to indigenous ruling groups in colonized territory (Anderson, 1983a: 102). There is then, the occurrence of the conflation of nation and state. The imagined community finds the gauge of its autonomy in a state. And, vice versa the state finds in the nation its modern legitimation (Anderson, 1983b: 477-478). Implicit in Anderson's narrative is that industrial capitalism helps create nationalism, which was at the same time a response to global imperialism (Anderson, 1983b: 127). Ironically however, as the classical nation-state project was coming fully into its own; advancing capitalism was beginning to sap its foundations (Anderson, 1998: 66).

Benedict Anderson's explanations, through a useful critique of the way that people read "nation" as merely a convenient shorthand expression for "nation-state," illuminates how, in reality, these are two interlinked entities with distinct histories, constituents and interests (Anderson, 1983b: 477). Anderson sees nation-states as pursuing policies that constitute the following variable mix of two types of general interests: it is best to conceive the state's interest as "representational" and the nation's as "participatory" interests (Anderson, 1983b: 478).

The intriguing question then would be just how these circumstances come about. To understand the seemingly contrasting perspectives, we have to attempt to focus on a specific cooperative effort when mutual interests can evolve in specific functional issues, particularly with regard to Indonesians, paraphrasing Swidler, people, or Indonesians do not build lines of action from scratch and culture influences action through the shape and organizations of those links (Swidler, 1986: 277). It is true that during unsettled periods, explicit ideologies may directly govern action and thus prevent Indonesians to reshape their repertoire, or "tool kit" habits, skills, and styles from which people construct "strategies of action" in a more natural way. The result may be that Indonesians in general are unable to value ends for which their cultural equipment is well suited (Swidler, 1986: 273-286). Moreover, modern technology may reinforce and at the same time threaten the project of the nation-state that will contribute to the difficulties of the process of negotiation between local particulars and the global cultural flows. On this particular issue, what Michael J. Shapiro thought of as insurrectional textuality seems appropriate (Shapiro, 1989):

"…inasmuch as dominant modes of understanding exist within representational or textual practices, criticism or resistant forms of

interpretations are conveyed less through an explicitly argumentative form than through a writing practice that is resistant to familiar modes of representation, one that is self-reflective enough to show meaning and writing practices are radically entangled in general or one that tends to denaturalize familiar realities by employing impertinent grammars and figurations, by, in short, making use of an insurrectional textuality." (Shapiro, 1989: 13)

Franke Wilmer in her work on indigenous people and marginal sites in the changing context of world politics, discusses the development and modernization agendas underlying the social transformations occurring throughout the world (Wilmer, 1996: 360). I shall attempt to add to her observation based on the Indonesian experience. What is evident is not only that the presumed superiority of industrial economies and the bureaucratic systems that is necessary to manage them denigrate and undermine the cultural integrity and viability of indigenous peoples, but that there is extra state localized popular resistances that have been part of the Indonesian tapestry for the longest of time, which merit illumination. Prior to independence a common vision of a free nation was what linked these myriad resistance movements together (Anderson, 1983b: 481).

The state was weak from the very beginning. It was penetrated by society; people "joined" the state but then fundamental loyalties were typically to nation, ideological grouping, paramilitary organization, and local community. The penetration of the state continued via the political parties. As many of the traditional collaborationist upper classes in parts of the outer island lost many of their power and wealth, they were eager to protect their lineages' futures by sending their children into the civil service academies. They in turn added the energetically conservative and particularistic "ethnic" dimension to the kaleidoscopic inner life of the state. The army and Sukarno came to the "rescue" of the state (Anderson, 1983b: 483).

The price of the alliance with military leaders was the possibility of a successful coup and the installation of a military dominated regime. First, Sukarno began to encourage a remobilization of extra state popular organization, the result of which was that each political party was the core of a huge, organized, ideological family about 20 million strong, which competed fiercely for influence in every sphere of life and on a round-the clock basis. Hence the extra state popular movement penetration of the state resumed (Anderson, 1983b: 485).

Second, there was also an increasing emphasis on economic autarchy, and an actively anti-imperialist foreign policy. It was also aimed at decreasing the leverage of the United States in Indonesian domestic politics. Sukarno's strategy was unsustainable as Indonesia was too poor. The only institution capable of sustaining itself was the army because it was "legally" closed to party penetration and it controlled the bulk of the country's assets (Anderson, 1983: 486). The anti-communist massacres of 1965-1966 under the direction of the army leadership gave birth to the New Order, or in Ben Anderson's parlance, the resurrection of the state and its triumph vis-à-vis society and nation (Anderson, 1983b: 487).

Anderson argued that the amalgam "nation-state," is rather recent and that often it conjures a popular participatory nation with our older adversarial state. The behavior of the amalgam varies in character

according to the predominance of any one of its components (Anderson, 1983b: 494).

So, returning to Franke Wilmer's statement about the political dominance of one educated/re-socialize ethnic group in which the values supportive of modernizing programs have been internalized over others who are labelled "backward" etc, with regards to Indonesia, we really need to put it in the context of the existence of societal forces that are prone to threatening acts against each other or toward the state. An important contextual backdrop to any analysis of political change in Southeast Asia must take into account the resistant properties of culture and tradition, whether they are part of that particular society's overwhelming complexity or locally situated dimensions of change (Vatikiotis, 1996). Like in 1997 for example, when the nation experienced slow and uneven pace of economic reform, there has been an escalation of violence. Communities are torn apart as various religious and ethnic mobs squabbled over their source of livelihood. Groups and individuals that had been willing to tolerate the crony capitalist economic structure so long as the government delivered the economic goods challenged the legitimacy of the government in Indonesia.

In democratic Indonesia, there is an apparent need to provide a more accurate assessment of the influence of popular forces in Indonesian politics as they express themselves in a most paradoxical way (Aspinall, 2014: 117-137). On the one hand, the organizational weaknesses of popular forces allowed forces incubated under the New Order to reassert their leadership. On the other hand, the many networks and clusters of actors that connect that ruling elite with activist groups and coalitions face too many pathways for entry and co-

optation by the ruling elite (Aspinall, 2014: 122-124).

The legacies of authoritarian rule shaped the resources and strategies available to Indonesian political actors, what seems to complicate the analysis is the heterogeneity of the New Order elites (Pepinsky, 2014: 94). Pepinsky prescribed a solution to this complexity: that the study of Indonesian politics must follow broader disciplinary advances in the social sciences, and adopt a more sophisticated toolkit for resolving competing approaches (Pepinsky, 2014: 97).

Likewise, in international studies there is the universal logic that must be considered within, that constrains the trajectory of the reinvention if international studies for the Post Western world when not based on the prevailing logic. There is a need for a greater awareness of the non-Western experience of international politics and of how it will affect global affairs, or in Lizee's term it is important to reengage in context, the issue of universals.

We Can Reinvent International studies on Southeast Asia in the immediate future

As the particular is always a function of the universal this brings the argument, back to the idea that a renewed and opened ended exploration of the universals that traverse global politics (Lizee, 2011: 204). This is what will reveal what has been missed by the discipline when it comes to the non-Western world.

International studies discipline need to adopt the language of the particulars in conceptualizing what it considers as universals, what is truly global in global politics. The key issue is that the language of the particulars that is adopted remains a function of the universals. We need to

reflect on both the universals and the particular. International studies today must touch upon and explore in open ended ways the universals that pertain to global politics. Most global politics will involve the need to define the new universal elements. New actors, perspectives, and agenda may be added to the structure and values of global politics that we commonly refer to. What follows is a debate on bonds, and shared agendas that will determine global politics in the future. It is understandable if the new debates will pertain to new universal elements that will influence global relations.

International studies in Indonesia will contribute to the new debates when Indonesia develops its international studies discipline by allocating more funding to conduct inductive studies that will ensure the relevance of the Indonesian experience to the ongoing debate.

As Pierre Lizee has elaborated the question of what next for international studies requires that the discipline considers numbers of elements: the nature of violence. The character of the state must also be the focus of deeper analysis. The nature of democratization and the nature of economic development must be taken into account when considering the importance of the non-Western world in the evolution of global politics.

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