

Globalism, Regionalism and Cultural Dynamics

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I. Global Problems, Local Solutions: A Two-Way Street

Chancellor Kuyama, President Jozaki, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly honoured to be here today -- and doubly so. First, Chancellor Kuyama, by your most gracious invitation to become the fourth annual Bishop Lambuth lecturer. Secondly, President Jozaki, by the high academic honour which Kwansei Gakuin University has just conferred on me. Both gestures will help fill a swelling storehouse of memorable and cherished experiences during my stay in this stimulating and cultivated land.

I am also very conscious of the high level of eloquence and scholarship that has been set by the previous Lambuth Lecturers. Professor Reischauer, Vogel and Bellah spoke as respected authorities on Japanese history, culture and religion -- and thus, while I have taken great interest in this country and its people, I follow in their footsteps with a measure of diffidence and humility.

This lecture series has been established and dedicated to the search for better understanding of Japan's place in this swiftly

changing, ever more complex world of the late 20th century. Such a quest, I feel, is a most fitting way to honour the memory of your founder who brought to these shores nearly a century ago a vision of an educational institution that, while firmly grounded in Japanese cultural soil, would look outward to Asia and the rest of the world in a spirit of international understanding and Christian brotherhood of all men.

One senses that the global community today may be groping -- fearfully and uncertainly at times but still hopefully -- toward the realization of some very similar sort of vision, one that recognizes both the common stake we have in our membership in the human race as well as the need to preserve and draw on the strengths of humanity's infinite and wondrous diversities.

To be sure, there are seeming contradictions in this concept, the global outlook, the idea of a closely interdependent family of man, could appear to be at odds with the idea of pluralism, of the search for authenticity and the age-old impulse of man to assert his particularity within a natural unit or group.

Perhaps the first thing to be recognized about the present state of the world's well-being is that the symptoms are changing daily, if indeed not hourly. We live in a world in a state of rapid, bewildering and frightening change. The signs of a literal transformation of the global society are everywhere. If we are to survive and progress in this increasingly insecure, perilous and fragile world, we are going to have to learn the art of existing, at more than double population density, in a continuing state of rapid social change accompanied by

great common vulnerability.

All societies, the strong and the weak, are now exposed to many forces and processes beyond their control, and all national boundaries have become permeable to the transnational impact of economic, political, social and cultural influences emanating from elsewhere on the globe.

Like the great jet streams that circle the earth high in the atmosphere and help set continental weather patterns, so too do streams of new ideas and cultural forces -- in science, in music, in fashion, in the arts -- sweep round our globe. We are no more capable of resisting the life-styles they can dictate than we are of redirecting the jet streams.

Yet counterpoised against these high global winds of change, one also encounters sudden rising currents shaped by the particular topography of local cultures -- traditional religions and beliefs, village customs and mores, regional peculiarities and practices -- that can help set up turbulence and produce storms of social and cultural unrest and protest. We need to find ways to ride our and accommodate such storms for they are as inescapable a part of human life as is the daily weather.

They are currents that stem from the search for authenticity and particularity that is occurring the world over, but especially in the Third World where they are frequently linked with the process of nation-building. Today's problems must be understood in the context of the tension between the universal forces at work and the immense power of nationalism and its ability to bestow a sense of belonging. This speaks to the need to relate local-level problems -- national-level

problems -- to their global dimensions and, in turn, try to understand the local manifestations of global problems. There are global problems that will require local solutions and vice-versa -- it is a two-way street.

If we are going to be able to cope with and manage a world in a constant state of risk from many directions, we need institutions that will recognize the interconnections between problems at global, regional, national and local levels. We cannot continue to break up our problems for the intellectual convenience of researchers in different disciplines or the bureaucratic convenience of the administrator. While neatness may have certain aesthetic appeal to the tidy mind, it overlooks the fact that real life tends to be messy and full of the unexpected. To manage the highly tangled and uncertain affairs of the world in the 21st century, we are going to have to find ways to create a breed of bureaucrats who will live by Emerson's dictum that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

This is so because it must be recognized that the notion of constancy or permanency of institutions is no longer viable. The comfortable maxims which once guided the world's economic functions, power balances, resource allocations, energy uses, and societal arrangements are everywhere being questioned in the face of increasing fragmentation, instability and awareness of common vulnerability.

The slim and precarious measure of stability which characterized the post-war world and the period of detente -- built largely on an uneasy and perilous nuclear stalemate -- appears to have disappeared. That stability ignored basic issues of structural change and cultural

diversity at both global and national levels. It is no longer possible to put off these issues.

The belief in economic growth and the "trickle down" theory -- the conventional notions of development of the 1960s and 1970s -- have clearly been unable to provide certain minimums of human survival to hundreds of millions around the globe who continue to live a life of squalor, injustice and despair. A restructuring of the world system, one which could offer hope of a life of dignity for all humanity and reduce rather than widen the gap between rich and poor, is long overdue.

The world economy is in a period of markedly slower growth and even stagnation and will manifestly not respond to shop-worn traditional nostrums. It is important to stress moreover that the great disparities which characterize the North-South gap are not only a matter of relative economic wealth, but also vast inequalities in power as well as access to and capacities to create knowledge. These gaps are central elements in the current global dynamics which cannot be glossed over. Until they are surmounted, the poorer and most populous countries will remain chained to the bottom of the development ladder.

At the same time, major shifts in the global configuration of power are under way as a further dynamic complication. More and more, we are witnessing how futile an instrument power really is in coping with the many inexorable forces of social change and profound shifts in values that are upsetting the political equilibrium both nationally and internationally.

There are also problems of massive population movements within and across national boundaries of developing as well as industrialized countries -- by migrant workers, illegal immigrants, and refugees of war, oppression, famine and other disasters. Very little is known about this vast resettlement, but it is bound, over the next several decades, to change the ethnic and cultural compositions of many countries and increase social tensions. Another thing is certain: this problem, like so many others that are part of today's world, will never be resolved with resort to make force.

All signs seem to point to one inescapable fact: no one is in control and no one nation or group of nations can any longer chart the course of the world. Power resides, in a sense, in the hands of no one -- and everyone. This may be the hardest lesson of all for the previously powerful.

The industrialized countries are experiencing great political and economic difficulties in adjusting to the growing industrialization of the South, and the shifting configuration in economic power. Their political and social institutions -- party machines, trade unions, and government bureaucracies -- were created largely as responses to other, older problems than those we face today.

There has been perhaps less institutional erosion here in Japan, for you were fortunate in being able to set down the essential infrastructures in rich traditional cultural soil. In his Lambuth lecture last year, Robert Bellah argued that Japanese adherence to traditional religious, ethical and social practices had helped to reinforce this nation's

economic development and modernization. While I essentially agree with him, I think that none-the-less one can now detect a growing questioning of the high human and social costs of moving into the economic front ranks on the international scene. The environmental ravages, the increased alienation and signs of drift -- particularly by the young -- away from cultural moorings are increasingly viewed as unacceptable side affects of modernization and industrialization.

The Third World countries are showing equal signs of fragmentation, disarray and swirling force for change. They are caught up in sharp conflict, socially, politically, economically, and culturally, both at home and abroad. As a bloc, the Third World countries have not been able to act in unity; they have displayed a host of competing interests, values and perspectives which ill-serve them in the North-South dialogue. Since the Second World War, over 100 wars have been fought in the Third World -- and while a number can be attributed to the major powers choosing allies and battlefields, this has by no means always been the case.

Internally, many developing societies, it must be admitted and faced up to, are in deep trouble. In many of the developing countries of Asia, for example, the first generation of political institutions proved to be unable to cope with the needs of their societies and collapsed. The second generation is now about to be tested by problems of succession, but we have done very little study of these second generation institutions -- we have little idea where they might lead us, or how they might affect the political processes through which social change can come about.

Existing political theory is very inadequate to an understanding of these processes. Political scientists in the West seemed to have lost interest in the developing societies with the demise of the Western-model first generation institutions; their colleagues in the Third World meanwhile often became too ideologized to make significant contribution to a more comprehensive understanding.

There seems to have been a strange division in political theory. One part of it deals with the state in terms of static equilibrium models, almost in total isolation from the international scene; the other concentrates on international relations between states but ignores the great transformations under way within societies. Both are equally irrelevant to the real world where there is need to understand not only the fact of change but also the large range of convulsions that are shaping change. This means integrating historical and cultural dimensions with political and economic ones. When some societies turn either too inward or too outward, this is not because of economic issues, as is often claimed, but rather deep-seated cultural impulses.

We have failed to take in account these very profound forces that are embedded in the religious/cultural substratum on which such political structures must be built. These are forces that turn on the ultimate core questions of human existence -- death, hope, tragedy, love, loyalty, power, and the meaning and purpose of life. To a large extent these forces determine the dynamics that will give shape to the second generation of institutions.

These deep-flowing ethical and spiritual streams could be akin to the deep or "hidden structures" which the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and others have suggested are essential keys to our understanding the structure and dynamics of societies. These deep structures can prefigure the manner in which a society responds to new stimuli or reacts to new situations. They are reflected in the basic values of a society.

Underlying all of the political and economic instability which we see in both industrialized and developing societies are very profound cultural changes and value shifts. These are manifested, for example, in altered concepts of work or changing consumer expectations and saving habits. They can also be traced to the rise of new religiosity, the search for new life-styles and the emergence of single-issue politics.

These are shifts that reflect people's changing conceptions about the meaning of life. They create forces that are frequently beyond the capabilities of institutions or the control of governments. While they are in many ways healthy and commendable, they also contribute to the general sense of fragmentation, vulnerability and loss of control.

Equally challenging to conventional management systems is the heedless plunder of the globe's finite resources, often in the name of progress and the advance of science and technology. In the rush to modernization and industrialization, we have recklessly brushed aside considerations of just how fragile and delicate the earth's life-support system is and how much its misuse ultimately affects us all. We must find ways to adjust our behaviour to the carrying capacity of the planet.

At the moment, however, and particularly in the Third World, we are seriously lacking in institutional capacity to even monitor the changes we are imposing on the environment, much less successfully manage them on a sustainable basis.

Overshadowing all our management weaknesses -- for its failings would threaten all life on this planet -- is our inability to come to terms with the mindless momentum and pathology of the arms race. The ease with which increasingly sophisticated weaponry can snuff out lives -- almost always young lives it seems -- has been demonstrated with sickening repetition, most recently in the cold waters of the South Atlantic. The world's growing capacity to inflict violence and destruction is being purchased at fearful cost -- economically, socially and spiritually. As Erik Eckholm comments in his new book, Down to Earth, "Something is out of whack when the world is incapable of raising \$80 million a day to provide clean water to all people, but lays out \$1.4 billion a day on weapons."

Thus on many fronts there is much that is disquieting and disturbing about the present state of the world -- the symptoms are simply not those of a healthy global society. And looking ahead, even the most dyed-in-the-wool optimist would be foolish not to concede that things are undoubtedly going to get worse before they get better.

There is, for example, the reality of soaring populations. Despite remarkable successes in several countries in reducing fertility rates, rapid population increase is expected to continue. Here in Asia alone there will be one billion more people by the year 2000.

The implications of this quantum jump in population increase can be read in a number of ways -- all of them disturbing and taxing of our creative ingenuities, management capacities and readiness for moral response. Within the demographics, for instance, lies the explosive issue of youth unemployment, already an extremely bothersome concern in many countries, both industrialized and developing. In only the ASEAN nations, there are now some 110 million young people under the age of 15 whose expectations for a more decent existence than their parents knew cannot be ignored. Coming to terms with such demands in ways that will not rend the fabric of our societies is one of the most perplexing challenges that we can face.

Population growth also casts the energy outlook in a far starker light. One should, in fact, look at growth not only in terms of numbers, but also in energy consumed per capita. In which case it could be argued that high energy consuming countries -- like the United States and Japan -- still have their own kind of population problems. We will all have to make fundamental adjustments to the high cost of energy for a very long period in the future.

Another disturbing harbinger of instability can be read in the global energy and food outlook. Here the projections indicate converging tracks -- with spreading and disastrous consequences as rising fuel prices, boosting fertilizer, transportation and other agricultural costs, inevitably push food prices beyond the reach of the hungry poor.

In virtually every corner of our global canvas, serious concerns lie ahead, we turn inevitably to the problems of the poor. It is their

tragic lot, more than anything else, that inexorably drives up population curves as they see their children die young, leaves environmental destruction in the wake of their desperate search for food and fuel, empties the countryside of its young and most productive citizenry, and packs urban slums to overspilling and unmanageable proportions. It is in the countless millions of stories of daily human misery that we can perceive the absolute necessity of finding local solutions to global problems.

The ability to find such solution, however, will only be achieved after we improve our understanding of the cultural and social dimensions of these problems, including those "hidden structures" of which I spoke a moment ago.

We need, for example, to know more about the dynamics of community participation, the role of women, village self-management and farmers' associations. We must pay fuller attention to many hitherto unheard voices -- the marginal farmer, the landless labourers, women and other disadvantaged groups in the countryside.

The survival of the world will not only depend on the elite and the expert. It will depend as much or more on whether we can get poor peasants not to cut down another tree and to find alternative ways of meeting their basic needs. The ultimate answers are going to arise from our ability to relate the recommendations of the expert and the technocrat to the hopes, interests and aspirations of those who, until now, have been marginalized and powerless.

The little people are on the march. Virtually all the significant social and political movements in the last two decades have begun from below. Whether one speaks about liberation movements, or trade union movements, or the women's movement, or the environmental movement, all came up from below. And now we have the anti-nuclear movement, and we have witnessed its power to cause political leaders to adjust and take new positions.

Such movements from below are further fraying and eroding the capacities of existing institutions and governments to deal with them. And yet they must be dealt with for they are expressions of very profound value changes of great magnitude. Beyond that these voices need to be heeded for they may have something very, very significant to say. There is much that is fresh and original in many of these challenges to old assumptions about development, economic growth, consumption patterns and life-styles.

In his thought-provoking work, Entropy, Jeremy Rifkin suggests, for example, that in the expressions of new spirituality which are evidence in so many parts of the world there may be important philosophical underpinnings to the ending of the era of high energy use. He notes that a number of the principles that will have to govern a low-energy world -- rejection of excessivematerialism, voluntary restraints, communal sharing, and the simple life -- are very much consistent with the teachings of all the great world religions. All in their traditional wisdom stress the concept of becoming one with the metaphysical unity of the universe. All endorse the desirability of defining ourselves

not by what we own, but what we are within the common fellowship of humankind.

This suggests, I believe, the sorts of insights that might await us if we can but improve our capacity to listen to other voices, to be receptive to other thoughts, and to be tolerant of those who may seem different. Out of such new ideas could well come development strategies and trajectories of industrialization that are basically different and more consonant with human dignity and justice than those we have followed to date. We could begin to see a process unfold -- and it may already be in train -- that could lead to the emergence of alternative non-Western modern civilizations in various parts of the world, possibly the Sinitic, Hindu, Islamic as well as others. They will wish to take their rightful place side by side Western civilization on a basis of rough parity. This could well point us toward a world I believe we all wish to create -- a world at peace in global interdependence and richly pluralistic in its cultural diversity.

One of the most important acts in the fulfilment of this ancient dream of humanity living in peace would be the emergence on the world scene of strong moral leadership, that could articulate the moral and ethical imperative of our somehow arriving at an overarching set of shared human values to guide us in our quest for a future that is equitable, just and free of the scourge of war.

Japan, I believe, could be uniquely fitted to play this role of moral leadership. She has economic power and the technological expertise to sustain that power and therefore can gain easy entry to the world's

council chambers. As the only nation to have known the searing horror of atomic attack, she is deeply committed to peace and alone among the major powers in her constitutional rejection of war and nuclear weapons. This gives her an eloquent and undeniable voice in demanding a world more capable of peaceful management, one that recognizes moral reasoning as the only viable basis for regulating its affairs.

Countries who wish to rely on moral authority, however, must avoid any appearance of vacillation or lack of firm commitment that is devoid of moral dignity. The future vision they offer needs to be stated in forceful, confident and lucid terms with no room for an interpretation of ulterior, short-term motives. I think Japan could bring to the world the promise of such a future, one that is technologically and economically feasible, but above all morally sustainable.

Thank you very much.

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