

## Some Comments on:

### **Dr. Abdollah Zandieh**

What is culture? And, what is development? And, more so, where from, where to? Dr. Najafbegy has picked up a popular yet an authentic topic for scholarly discussion. His message could have been better conveyed if he had allocated a limited space of his article offering a definition of the two controversial terms.

Writers claim that there are over three hundred definitions of culture! Yet in the midst of such abundance some have dared offer statements of their own. Some, however, have bordered on purely objective, i.e. materialistic, definitions: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including this embodiment in artifacts."<sup>2</sup>

Some have noticed the valuelessness of the industrial man's narcissistic self-love that has pushed him toward radical hedonistic pleasures to the detriment of his self and his society.<sup>3</sup> In his pioneering sociological work on the American society, Amitai Etzioni, has drawn some conclusions on the implications of such narcissistic cultural dominance= a ) a misconception of "quality of life" toward an undisciplined and an un-appreciative attitude on life and work, b ) hedonistic attitude toward education and profession as well as marriage, resulting in irresponsibility, widespread corruption

and immoral relationships deep into the family structure. (Conceptual interpretation and wording are from the author).<sup>4</sup>

Another definition is: Culture is the collection of values, embodied in the family, education, business, socio-political content and socio-individual relationships of a society, distinctive in its collectivity from other societies, acquired through time. It exists as "the climate" in a society, influencing, but not imposing itself on, individuals and group, "through time". In the Islamic context one may add the state and the degree of conviction and submission to Allah, devotion to the Islamic system of governance and life and sacrificing one's property and soul in the struggle toward the effective conveyance of the Islamic message to mankind".

The concept of development is no less controversial than culture. Inclined more to the realm of the economist, development is considered purely economic growth. And astonishingly, this is the concept emphatically pursued by the majority of western-educated economists in the developing countries. Surprisingly enough, even among the economists, mavericks have been known to emphasize the cultural heritage of a nation as the indispensable precondition for material development in whatsoever concept.<sup>5</sup> With Marxism as the ardent advocate of this materialistic concept disintegrated in the ashes of history and the West on the brink of a catastrophic and social crisis, man is rightly at the crossroads to decide his fate. But will

the West's materialistic, though ephemerally superficial, dominance over their present-day world allow any valiant scholar statesmen, journalist or intellectual to heed? Time will tell.

So far for the definition which might have already exceeded the place allotted by the editor. Let us now review the main characteristics of Prof. Najafbegy's treatise.

One aspect that strikes the mind is the writer's shying away from the content of "culture" and "development" as propounded by the western hegemony. The problem is not that the west inadvertantly ignores the cultural content of the development that it is offering. Realistically looking at the problem. the process of development embraces the following characteristics:

1. The administrative , managerial , financial and cultural content of transfer content and process is, at least , alien, having been developed exclusively for the owner country;

2. The owner country is not, necessarily, unbiased in the transfer process, itself being in fierce competition with other competing countries to win markets in TWCs;

3. The development process, even in it's purely economic form, would reduce the TWC capacity to import DC ( developed country) manufactures in the long-run , hence, DC's determination to move against it;

4. The very nature of TWC's cultural content is not, by itself, receptive to

the purely consumer-oriented Western onslaught unless it is effectively subdued (which invariably is);

5. The west does intend, through the instrumentality of the " demonstration effect",<sup>6</sup> through it's mass media as well as through their graduates in the recipient countries, to minimize the influence of the local culture, hence, facilitating the transformation recess;

6. Past World War II. experience has repeatedly proven, through demonstration cases such as the Phillipines, Mexico , Somoza's Nicaragua, Egypt and Morocco, that Western hegemony, in such hypocritically developmental effort, relyon the corrupt local statemen and more corrupt rulers and businessmen to introduce and to administer their aid and trade;

7. Nearly all cases of exportable produce developed in the TWCs have been confined to un-processed raw material in it's crudest form;

8. The case of strategic raw materials such as oil and scarce minerals has even brought outright military intervention by the West, such as in the Persian Gulf;

9. Last but never the least has been an effective, widespread attempt to bar certain education and training to take root in the TWC's. The heart-rending story of one or a handful of undergraduates, in many African countries at their independence after World War II is a case in point.

One would have to lament the permissiveness in the TWCs to remove all barriers, political, economic, cultural and market, in allowing the West a totally free hand

in their native countries. But what else would one expect from regimes despotically ruling over countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco through their disillusioned elite? One would love to see the indigenous ingenuity given play in selecting and adapting intermediate technology toward a smooth assimilation into the local economy. But this is the hard way to development, neither the self-serving Western countries nor their corrupt lustful local counterparts feel responsible to heed.

Dr. Najafbegy could be no more authentic in stating that "technology can be both an agent of change and a destroyer of values." In reality, it has proven to be a destroyer of values and whatever potential that existed in the local economies replacing them with unemployment, inflation dependence, class conflict and cultural alienation.

In quoting the former Minister of Education, of Lesotho, the writer has failed to assign proper weight to the concept of vocational literacy, not literacy per se. This is a pragmatic, work-oriented training that could easily gain popularity and real practical advantage in the farm and the factory, but certainly not in the interests of the West and their devoted local agents.

But certainly the writer is wrong by stating that "technology is merely a tool conferring no status in itself". Technology is not an inanimate reflection of the producing country. Technology is the applied embodiment of capitalist values

where maximization of profit and purely hedonistic pleasures domineer. Technology is all words and message, truly representing the amoral hearts of scientists and designers subservient to their employers simply against their paychecks; perceptive, noble men reduced to hedonism as their ultimate pursuit.

I would like to make no secret of my concern over the compromising tone in the writer's concluding paragraphs. TWC's financial weakness is no excuse for the concept of "exchange" presented there. The commanding question for the TWC's is a self-awakening, uprising them to their full stature against being avariciously exploited by nations who have proven, through objective historical experience, devoid of qualities that call for man's nobility and grace. Islam has borne the message through the last decade. And it has been in welcome response to this message that a billion mass of the universal Islamic family has discovered their self. And it's been in response to this message that perceptible men and women in the TWCs all over the globe have joined hands.

May Allah bless them all.

#### References

##### Culture

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- 3-
- 4- The Hollowing of America Time, Dec. 1982.
- 5- On The Theory of Social Change By E.E. Hageh Dorsay press, 1962.
- 6- Capital Formation In Developing Countries By Ragnar Nurkse