

Is there any 'Asian Values' in the Process of Negotiation as a Part of Cultural Diplomacy?

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Abstract:

Culture, like any other variables is a tool to express and represent a particular 'value', which is also a vehicle of communication, carrying out the transformative effects upon international relations. Respecting one's culture, is actually a signal sending towards the threshold of a fruitful negotiation, and winning the heart of other party in the same. Thus, cultural diplomacy plays an eminent role in contemporary times to understand and recognise the ethos of other party. With the adoption of this new diplomatic means, it enhances and eases in the negotiating process and entails a new responsibility to support and examine between the negotiating parties. It is argued that the international system is ruled and directed according to the western values and cultures. However, time has come at global politics where there is a change from high politics to low politics and from hard power to soft power wherein the significance of cultural diplomacy places itself an effective diplomatic platform in modern times. This research paper assesses the emerging role of Asian cultural values during the time of negotiation, and its importance and significance to bear a fruitful negotiation.

Introduction

In today's world, the relations among the nations are becoming closer through many variants unlikely in 19th and 20th century. Most states prefer to persuade other countries by using soft power rather than the hard power through the coercion mechanisms. In fact, a shift from high politics to low politics and from hard power to soft power has taken place in international politics. Therefore, the public diplomacy herein comes to play a crucial role in contemporary negotiation between parties, which gives importance to culture, media, education, tourism and related activities, outreaching to foreign and home publics.

It is fact that culture used to be an important determinant in the past as all diplomats who represent a state belongs to a certain culture. Hence, the culture could not be left aside. In the globalised world of today, International Relations has to do about society, people and their

cultures in addition to government, and therefore, the role of culture has become a relevant. That is why cultural diplomacy or promotion of cultures among states has acquired greater importance. However, there is always bias in the western cultures as they consider their cultures being superior as compare to other cultures. Even in Samuel Huntington's book on *'The Clash of Civilisation and the Last Man'* shows the western cultures as the most civilized one on earth. The first part of the proposed paper will look at the importance of Asian Value and testing whether the concept of Asian Value is accepted by other Asian countries. The second portion will examine whether Asian value has an impact in the process of negotiation or how it differs from other negotiating styles.

Defining the Asian Values

Kishore Mahbubani, a former Singaporean diplomat, the champion of 'Asian Values' which got the global recognition on 'Asian Values' thesis describes that the rise of Asia is both irresistible and good for the world. He states that the Asian 'marched to modernity' draws the inspiration and borrows heavily from 'the seven pillars of the western wisdom', namely free-market economics, science and technology, meritocracy, pragmatism, a culture of peace, respect for the rule of law and education. He documents the impressive Asian gains in each of these seven areas and ongoing desire to adapt them in the Asian society. Being an intellectual cheerleader, he himself wanted to liberate Asians for what he calls 'mental colonisation' and to empower them to challenge the dominance of the West (Mahbubani 2008).

Two important fundamental agendas reside in the Asian Value. First is the cultural preservation and national or group identity agenda, which has to do with identifying unique, special or symbolically important aspects of cultural values, ethical norms and conceiving of ways of protecting these norms and values from power of western-derived cultural and ethical influences. Second is an overt political agenda (Ingleson 1998: 228-29). Going back to history, Asian Values emerged as a political issue in 1980s when former Singapore Premier Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysian Premier Mahathir Bin Mohamad challenged the west, by juxtaposing Asian success against what they saw as the West's hegemony-oriented thinking, and its claims of universal standards of democracy and human rights. Francis Fukuyama claimed that Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir Mohamad were pursuing 'a relatively narrow agenda' to support their argument on Asian Values. However, he accepted that the idea of a distinct Asian cultural and political identity 'had a larger resonance as well as it reflected genuine pride felt by many people in the region for the stunning success of their

economies. In addition, it serves the interests of states eager to shield themselves from western criticisms of their human rights practices and from pressure to open their protected markets to imports the foreign investments. Fukuyama argued that Asian Values offered ‘an apparently principled defence of their reluctance to broaden political participation,’ for countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and China (Rana 2007).

Debate on Asian Values

Discussions, or debates has been made by the East and Southeast Asian government officials and their critiquing in journals like Foreign Affairs policy, and the Journal of Democracy about the Asian Values, drew the international attention asserting the cultural particularity which rejected the notion of the liberal democracy. For instance, several sub-Saharan Africa dictators in 1970s emphasized that their rules were accorded with ‘African traditions’, nevertheless, obvious economic failings undercut their claims. In contrast, the East and Southeast Asia, claimed to be the world’s fastest-growing region, which made the ‘Asian challenge’ much more interesting than anti-Western positions of the past. ‘Asian authoritarians argued from a position of economic and social success’, *The Economist* wrote in 1992 (Thompson, 2001).

Gradually two groups began to emerge. One is proponent of Asian Value and the other is the opponent of the same. Proponents contend that ‘Asian Values’ are a legitimate and identifiable value system shared by a number of Asian nations based on both Confucian and Eastern philosophies which include the values such as family, hard work and education as seen both by Asian and more communitarian and collectivist in their applications than the individualism of the western model. They believe that democratisation was spread by the process of decolonisation, which was adopted by the nationalist as the most effective argument against the colonial rulers. According to Robert Scalapino, Asian style of democracies exhibit both authoritarian and democratic elements.

On the other hand, the opponents of Asian Value point out the authoritarian characteristics that prevail in western democracies like one dominant party, centralised bureaucracy and strong state, and respect for authority as representative of regimes that place social order and political stability are ahead of individual rights and democracy. In fact, Asian leaders may be seen as manipulating Asian (Rohan-Jones 1993). Even the ‘Protestant ethic’ a form of ‘Asian values’ such as hard work, frugality, discipline, and teamwork attributes high growth rates to certain cultural traits.

Amitav Acharya (2011) criticises the over generalization of Asian Values. Acharya opines that the ASEAN, the societies of Southeast Asia were exposed to the cultural influences from India and China, but it is somehow managed to retain an identity, which is very different from those of India and China. They did not blindly accept the cultural hegemony of these two powerful civilizations, but localised Indic or Sinic ideas that were relevant to the local context and help legitimizing and empowering local societies. South East Asia becomes quite distinctive and different from either of them. India and China despite the rise of their powers in Asia, the ASEAN will survive if it manages to maintain a certain degree of cohesiveness.

From the realists perspective also, there is a tendency to view the rise of China by comparing it to the rise of Germany. However, the contextual nature of the two countries is quite different. By rejecting the essentialist view, some scholars state that Asia and Asian Identity or culture will come to the fore and save the region from any severe conflicts. In future, a combined force, cultural norms matter, economic linkages, political interactions and even a balance of power among the key players will be critical to Asia's future stability. Thus, viewing the only Asian Value is the not right approach since it may be applicable for countries like Singapore, Taiwan, and Hongkong etc. but it does not represent all Asian countries.

In the next section, this paper will examine whether Asian Values have an impact on the negotiating tables with other countries. Do all Asian countries accept the concept of Asian Value by following the common mannerism when it comes to the negotiation table with western countries or among themselves? If no, how does it differ from other western countries?

Do Asian Values Has an Implication in Negotiation?

It is fact that cultural diplomacy is a subset of a public diplomacy where culture plays a great role in a negotiation. Diplomats having different cultural background reflect differently. The style of diplomats of a nation is a function of that society's norms and values. Thus, a negotiating practice differs from culture to culture. In Kishan Rana's book '*Asian Diplomacy*', he states that Asian countries have a high-context culture, people oriented where principles, rules and issues are seen in relative terms, preferred non-verbal, implicit communication, pragmatism, long term orientation, viewing events not as discrete, finite episodes but as scenes in a continuum and their negotiating style shows affinity.

However, different countries in Asia perform negotiation differently based on their identity and the type of culture, which he/she belongs to. For example, India's negotiating styles are different from the rest of the Asian countries. The Personality of the diplomats also plays an important role for a successful negotiation. For instance, the role of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his visit to other parts of the world, the way he folds his hand and says 'Namaste' as a warm greetings to people of foreign nations reflect Indian culture that has rooted in the Indian soil. It shows how Indian cultures are different from American or any western cultures.

The negotiating style of US and India are different even though both the countries have the democratic form of government. Usually, America preferred for a signed contract as their goal but Japanese, Chinese and other cultural groups in Asia do not. Japan is very famous for their smart bargaining in any negotiation. Presenting gifts becomes as a norm and culture of Japan. US see negotiation as a linear process, a sequence of stages that typically culminates in an end game and a binding agreement. Another example is Japanese and many other Asians, who hide their feelings unlike Latin America, show their emotions at the negotiating table. German preferred of informal talks in the negotiation.

Unlike Germans who are always punctual and Latin's are habitually late, Japanese negotiate slowly and Americans are quick to make a deal (Salacuse 1998). India also behaves differently when it comes to negotiation with other countries. The behaviour of India towards Pakistan during a negotiation is different from how it reacts towards Moscow, US, or China. It depends on whom it is going to negotiate with (Cohen 2001). Subsequently, it is very much necessary to know and respect the culture of each party in a negotiation. Understanding and respecting the culture of other party may bring the fruitful negotiation at every level. Knowing the intention of other side paves the way to reach the threshold of successful negotiation.

Conclusion

Culture, in fact plays an important role in any negotiation. However, the focus of this paper is not simply only on culture but also to see whether there is such thing called 'Asian values', and how it affects any negotiation with any western countries or any negotiations among the Asian countries themselves. Different Asian countries have their own styles of negotiation. What one sees from Chinese style is different from how one see through the lens of India or any country. Asia has a diverse culture with a variety of different identities that is being

is a dynamic process. It keeps on changing according to time, circumstances and rooted the politics of the international relations. Therefore, one country will adopt its negotiating since style according to its own interest and its own political goal. Therefore, a country's policy is time not static, and Asian countries do not give much importance to common 'Asian Values' imme styles of negotiation but rather focusing more on its own negotiating style. morial

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