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Asia's Exotic Futures in the Far beyond the Present

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Abstract

This paper attempts to deconstruct and challenge the dominant discourses with regard to the longer term futures of Asia. First the mentality of reviving the shining past as well as paying attention to the GDP growth rate in the race of the East to take over the position of leaders from the West is reviewed. An association is made between a memorable metaphor and the scenario of reviving the shining past. Then some guidelines are introduced and applied to the far ahead futures of Asia including a) violating old implicit assumptions by applying what if mechanism, b) identifying and articulating distinct value systems, and c) detecting weak signals that may hint to the next mainstream. Four scenarios are built within the rationale of transformation scenario. The aim is to do exotic futures studies and to create alternative images. Such images not only may help shift the identity of future Asians but also influence today decisions and actions of both Asians and non Asians.

Keywords: Asia, East, West, value systems, transformation scenarios, space technology, life technology

Introduction

In the wake of a new kind of globalization in the modern era sometimes it may appear rather silly to ask a total stranger a very typical question: "Where are you from?" The point is that some people are "placeless" in a sense that they do not belong to a specific country, culture, language, and etc. Placelessness and not having clear and vivid roots may result in potential gains and pains in the life of an individual to the extent that, a related postmodern notion has become fashionable nowadays: to have "multiple identities" (Giridharadas, 2010). Having multiple identities is a growing problem for those people living in cultures other than their own in different moments of their lives which leads to "a variety of selves that are not integrated by any sense of culture" and thus will highlight "the most important trend of the future: the rise of cultures of schizophrenia, of madness" (Inayatullah, 1993).

Taking into account the fact of placeless people, in this paper the futures of Asia in the year 02060 will be discussed. The ideas presented here are chiefly centered on the current identity of Asians and its future changes. For the matter of clarification Asia is considered the habitat of people who recognize by themselves or with the help of others a distinguished identity for themselves shaped by both genetics and memetics, in a region on the Earth once ruled by political entities that were called Persian Empire, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Chinese Empire, Korean Empire, Japanese Empire, Mongol Empire, and Indian Empire. From a geopolitical and continental point of view the only misunderstanding or ambiguity regarding an Asian identity is usually raised on its borders with Europe (Worldatlas.com, 2010).

Anchor of the Shining Past and the GDP Mentality

Asia is home to a huge number of rather independent cultures. While according to the latest human genome studies Africa enjoys the most diversified pool of human genes (Wade, 2006), Asia has the claim of having the most diversified pool of human memes which according to Dawkins (1976) are "self-replicating units" and building blocks of culture.

Rich cultural heritage of Asia will doubtlessly establish some "significant path dependence" for the short and medium, if not the long term, futures. This will act as major anchors in the mental models of continents' leaders as well as the ordinary citizens. Moreover, most future scenarios are similarly biased towards our current sensibilities and what is collectively known as the present. Biases that come from past and present add to each other so that they tend to derail the effective building of alternative and innovative images of the futures.

These two biases are evident from a quick review of the remarks by Asian public figures and a good investigation of national foresight plans in the region. They usually reveal some nostalgic desire to resurrect a lost shining past again in the future. The race among Asian countries to achieve the top rankings in terms of development indicators has already gained momentum and is especially perceptible in China.

The Eastern political elite usually accept a cultural "backwardness" as judged by the criteria of modernized world and often suffer from a "deep internal contradiction." They tend to use the standards and indicators of the West and simultaneously want to encourage a "culture of resistance". The contradiction is understood by observing the fact that they want to imitate the West to become modernized countries and at the same time want to overcome it, implying a partial loss of self-esteem among them. In addition, they usually try to maintain and express some features unique to their culture to boost their self – identity and self-esteem, however, social scientists usually bring to their attention that these unique features could be themselves some impediments to progress. One way to overcome such a contradiction is to "invent a golden and shining past". However, "the past cannot be recreated and the alien culture becomes even more of an alternative and a model for imitations" and eventually this will result in "a deeper ambivalence toward one's own culture as well as the alien culture" (Nandy & Deshingkar, 1993).

In Iran, during the past decades a good evidence of the economic growth becoming an official dogma can easily be identified. The 20-year vision, which was adopted by the religiously driven leadership in 2005, envisages that "I. R. Iran in 2025 is a developed country that ranks first economically, scientifically and technologically in the region (of South West Asia).... with constructive and effective international interactions" (Tabatabaei Yazdi & Aboutalebi, 2008)[1]. The Iranian planning experts and officials used internal and external environmental scanning and scenario planning in their deliberations. There were three scenarios primarily based on assumptions about the futures of the economic growth rate. Currently Iran ranks the fourth country in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita after Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. The first assumes that during the next 20 years, countries in the South West Asia region will develop by an average of their 10-year record. To rank first in this vulnerable scenario Iran has to develop by 5.6% annual growth rate. The second assumes that during the next 20 years, countries in the region will develop by their top annual growth rate. To rank first in this scenario Iran has to develop by 11.5% annual growth rate. And the third assumption was that in the next 20 years, countries in the region will develop by an average of their top record and average of their 10-year record. To rank first in this scenario Iran has to develop by 8.6% annual growth rate. The latter assumption was both plausible and preferable for the scenario developers and therefore such an assumption substantiates the official 20-year vision document which aims specifically at one future (Mobini-Dehkordi & Rezaee Mirgha'ed, 2007).

This obsession with the GDP ranking is rife in Asia, with countries like South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and India being exemplars.

Asia as a whole, or as it is usually referred to in world affairs, the East has been long famous for holding tight some not-quite Western values such as collectivism in society, dependence on and caring about extended family members, reaching consensus in internal politics, showing respect for the elderly, always obeying the authority, living in harmony with nature, caring about the purity of blood in marriage, avoiding adventurous journeys (risk aversion), adhering to continuous improvement school in management, being more concerned with spirituality among others.

Asia thus exhibits contradictions. However, Linzheng (1993), the Chinese futurist, points out that on the path toward modernization some Asian countries have been able "to mix the best of the East and the West culture", with Japan becoming the leader and South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore and recently Malaysia closely following it. In his view, "cultural selection and reconstruction" has been a success story in Japan, effectively making a new and unique structure in which the Western and traditional Japanese co-exist. But cultural selection and reconstruction in China has lasted "more than a hundred years and is still far from success." This is due to the fact that Asian cultures are diverse and some are more amenable, incorporating new ideas from outside and others more monolithic and inflexible.

Facts on the ground point to an emerging competition between the West and Asia to secure a sustainable dominance over the continent and eventually the globe in the current millennium. This competition could be peaceful or could take a violent turn. In the modern era the human and economic development indicators such as GDP annual growth and Human Development Index (HDI) will tend to take the place of the ones

used in the ancient world such as the number of nations collected under an empire or the area of sprawling lands ruled by a single Emperor, King, Caliphate, or Sultan. However, the possibility that the competition could take a violent turn means that the military indicators will also be important as it was in the old empires.

Dead Faces, Wearing Makeup

In Japanese culture people observe the ritual of wearing makeup on dead body's faces before cremation[2]. Such an image could be a relevant metaphor for us to perceive the usual efforts by some currently powerful Asian counties who seek a new hegemony in their immediate region and far beyond and aspire to revitalize their deceased great past. They simply cannot forget about their golden ages and therefore refuse to bury their dead civilizations. Beside that, the GDP growth rates and other development indexes cannot well reflect the situation on the ground and they may only lead to provide some new and "sexy makeup" for such dead civilizations and empires.

Ignoring the Sexy Zombies

If we explicitly exclude all scenarios that involve the full awaking of currently pouncing Asian dragons, tigers, lions, bears, cats, etc. and their potential fight or friendly cooperation then we will be encouraged to start some thought experiments that may help us explore "uncharted waters ahead."[3]

While there is a possibility of the emergence of some geopolitical entity in the long term future that could be called an Asian Union which may emerge from the current regional organizations like The Arab League, Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Economic Cooperation Organization, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. But the separatist movements across the continent, seeking independence and autonomy, especially active among the ethnic communities currently living on the borders of nation-states that emerged after the World War II, will definitely challenge the current nation-states let alone balance the opposite drive. That is the drive of forming new united nation-states gathering the people whose ancestors once lived under the sphere of influence of one single ancient civilization and/or empire. In other words, the "balkanization scenario" is a significant possibility in the future through which "the Asian states collapse under the weight of virulent nationalism, the forces of fundamentalism and demands for independence from ethnic minorities" (Sardar, 1993).

Guidelines toward the Extraordinary

In order to develop extraordinary and exotic images of the futures one need to follow three specific guidelines.

The first guideline directs us toward identifying load-bearing vulnerable assumptions. The violation of load-bearing assumptions by applying What If Mechanism (WIM) hints at events that may play the role of trend-breakers in the long term. What

if questions help us gain "distance from the present, so as to see it anew." They are useful "to loosen the bounds of the present, to shift through our terrain, and find different spaces of intelligibility" (Inayatullah, 1993). Assumptions (of planning) are the judgments or evaluations about some characteristic of the future world that underlie our plans (Dewar, 2002). An assumption is load bearing provided that its violation results or necessitates some significant changes in the plan. The longer the horizon of a plan the more vulnerable its assumptions are. Thus in the horizon of this scenario building which extends far into the years ahead most of the load bearing assumptions, especially implicit ones, that can be identified and therefore become explicit are prone to violation and thus vulnerable.

Although assumptions in general are more vulnerable in the long run, assumptions about value systems are relatively less vulnerable. Individuals do change in a life timebut quite a few "radically" change their values. Values are "what we care about" in any decision situation and the identification and articulation of values not only result in more creative and effective solving of decision problems but also help identify and create decision opportunities in the future (Keeney, 1992). The value system of a group of individuals is reflected in the culture, traits, preferences, and principles of the individuals, that is what they collectively care about.

This specific guideline, that is the identification and articulation of value systems, (as opposed to a single value system), was emphasized in the Futures of Cultures Project, hosted by UNESCO in 1993 in Bangkok. According to Masini (1993), "culture is basic to the future" which means that "cultures and their futures, rather than technological and economic developments, are the core of humankind's highly uncertain future."

Schiller, a German poet, says "often do the spirits of great events stride on before the events. And in today already walks tomorrow." Thus the third guideline rests on magnifying and/or exaggerating the detected weak signals. Weak signals are "currently existing small and seemingly insignificant issues and events that can tell us about the change in the future" and can only be detected by some able environmental scanners who use widened surveillance filters and pay more attention to the periphery relative to the mainstream (Hiltunen, 2006).

All the above mentioned guidelines are used herein to produce the general class or family of transformation scenarios which in them as defined by Dator (2009) advanced technologies play a key role.

Scenario 1: The East remains on the earth after the West leaves for the space

The Asian identity is understood not only based on the geographical location of the continent on the globe but also in relation to other identities such as Europeans, Americans, and Africans. However, it seems that the East vs. West dichotomy is itself a big load-bearing implicit assumption that needs to be addressed explicitly in the far ahead futures. The question is that will the West be still there in the far future to contrast it with the East?

In the Cold War era people had to wake up almost every day from a nightmare, fearing of the Megadeath (Kahn, 1960). If we do not take into account the possibility of obliteration of nations because of a nuclear war as well as because of the occur-

rence of a new kind disease epidemic then an obvious alternative remains for wiping off the inhabitants of the whole continents. That is the colonization of space by future human beings.

Hawking believes that "the human race has no future if it doesn't go into space" (Morgan, 2007). Suppose that the current obstacles, technologically and economically, will be removed eventually in the far future. Do you bet on Westerners or Easterners to pack their bags and leave the Earth for good? By considering the Asian values and assuming such values will persist over a far ahead time horizon it is highly likely that the Westerners will leave and the Easterners will choose to stay. Based on most Asian philosophies people seek the meaning of their life in connection with the land of their ancestors. That is they really care about living in the place and on the land where their roots are buried, and to a larger extent the Earth itself.

Moreover, some religious thoughts are perceptibly Earth-chained. For instance, it is unimaginable, and of course unjustifiable, that you take Mecca, the Sun and the Moon from a Muslim, since he or she has to say the daily prayers and observe almost all the rituals based on his or her relative location to them. Similarly taking the holy river of Ganges from a Hindu is unthinkable. Even the 62-year yet unresolved Israeli-Arab conflict is solely about some violent disputes over a holy (for Muslims) or promised (for Jews) land which has a special meaning in the mentality of a huge number of people. Add to this the known adventure aversion and conservative attitudes in the sense of following the Wu Wei principles among Asians, even during their past shining times, and you can figure out that speculating that the Westerners will leave the planet will be a winning bet.

What if the West disappears from the globe? Clearly the old known categories of the East and the West will cease to exist. The descendants of current Asians will partially let loose the absolute value of not betraying the lands inherited form ancestors and gradually occupy the uninhabited lands in Europe and North America and will begin to grow some new roots in their new lands. The opposite applies to the descendants of current Westerners. If not all, most of them will gradually leave the lands of the old planet to relocate to some extraterrestrial place, either on their own or with the help of some intelligent aliens. The pattern of new wave of mass immigration will be such that the far east nations, notably South Korea, will stretch to North America and the far west nations will stretch to Europe. Japan may feel ambivalent to such an expansion because it now shows some resistance against immigration while South Korea, being more open, has already on the way to become a multinational society. Germany will change its name to Turkmany and France will be renamed to Arabance. Leaving England reserved for Parsland and Scandinavia for Kurdinavia. Such name changing will also mean that the current China, India, and Russia will divide the vacant lands across the old continent equally between themselves. Even if today we deem such developments rather laughable and incredible it should be emphasized that the said scenario will just enhance the immigration trends already locked-in.

In the absence of some hegemonic Western cultures on the Earth one can expect that the once marginalized Eastern languages and therefore cultures find some fresh room to breathe and flourish, effectively evading the “Singaporization scenario”

which, as suggested by Sardar (1993), means the destruction of all non-Western cultures in Asia.

What if the dominance of Western empiricist cultures and languages suddenly or gradually ends? In case that Europeans and North Americans leave the planet what will happen next is not only that Asian nation-states will begin to stretch east and west wards to fill their vacant lands but also a huge way-of-thought vacuum will be left behind. Eastern spiritual languages and cultures will be best positioned and capable of adding some brand new dimensions, bifurcations and/or mutations to the human experience. In such a world that lacks the pressure of the concrete and tangible way of (Western) thinking that helped pave the way for modernization and the emergence of tools and machines one can expect the occurrence of numerous surprises with regard to the human infinite potentiality and sphere of thought.

Human thought is bounded to language. According to Everett (2007) most human languages have no upper limits on what can be said through them. Chomsky suggests that the reason behind such infinity in languages is the recursion embedded in grammars, which means you can repeat a grammatical structure within the same structure within the same structure and so on. But Everett recently reported that he had discovered a weird human language called Pirahã in Amazon that lacks the recursion in its grammar, making the tribe's people speaking this peculiar language the ultimate empiricists and thus unable to think about and sense the spirits and understand spiritual experiences that most of us are used to live with it more or less.

Perhaps in the year 03060 another curious linguistics expert will report that an ancient weird language has been discovered in one of the remote locations of North America that seems quite primitive with regard to the common languages in 03060 and lacks some crucial features of the far away descendants of our current Asian languages. It will be known that this language was called English in 02060 just around the date that the Westerners left the planet.

Scenario 2: Asia serves the world with its huge live body reservoir

In 2001, an impressive report published by RAND concluded that "life in 2015 will be revolutionized by the growing effect of multidisciplinary technology" (Anton, Silberglitt, & Schneider, 2001). Not surprisingly, biotechnology took a significant credit because, as the authors eloquently explain, it "will enable us to identify, understand, manipulate, improve, and control living organisms (including ourselves)".

Five years later RAND researchers did a follow up study on the technology foresight and assessed by table crossing the technical and implementation feasibility of 56 integrated technology applications in 2020 on a global scale (Silberglitt, Anton, Howell, Wong, Bohandy, Gassman et al, 2006). Among the technology applications listed there were numerous future health-related potential commercialization (some of them according to the experts opinion right on the horizon) such as genetically modified animals for R&D, gene therapy, drugs tailored to genetics, therapies based on stem cell R&D, genetic selection of offspring, tissue engineering, Xenotransplation, and artificial muscle and tissue.

Another group of futurists participating in 2003 in a conference at the Boston University's Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future discussed the

Future of Human Nature and shared their thoughts on the Promises and Challenges in Genomics and Computer Science which is known among the transhumanist circles as the Singularity (Pardee Conference Series, 2004).

In a nutshell it was pointed out during the conference that "natural selection no longer determine the evolutionary process, artificial selection does." According to these scientists human cloning, germ line gene therapy, and reproductive applications have already passed the technical feasibility threshold and the major barriers to implement them are traditions, notably "religious and philosophical objections."

Cantor highlighted the fact that India and China, most of them adhering to pagan believes, do not share the Judeo-Christian values, thus the usual objections or suspicions are irrelevant and they "are extremely enthusiastic about the possibilities" particularly to pay for and order designer "male" enhanced babies.

Iran has a leading stem cell research center, the Royan Institute, which has done quite remarkable embryonic stem cell research as well as animal cloning in recent years. These achievements realized simply because there were no significant cultural barriers (Dolgin, 2009). Religious objections are effectively absent considering that the "ensoulment" of the fetus starts 120 days after conception.

Moreover, Iran is currently the "Nose Job Capital Of World" (Holguin, 2005), because a growing number of females as well as males are obsessed with Western beautiful noses (in addition to light-colored hair and eyes) and there is some major demand for such somatic manipulations. But to their frustration, their offspring have to pay again to do cosmetic surgeries on their noses because somatic engineering is not able to delete the genetic trace as it is possible through germ line genetic engineering.

For a biotechnologist having access to in vivo environments is the prerequisite to any successful live product development. Imagine that in the far future Asian people voluntarily "rent out their bodies" for tissue generation, either in corporations or in their own houses. They allow biotechnologists to grow on their bodies some in demand live body tissues such as limbs, hearts, kidneys, eyes, ears, stomachs, lungs, skin, etc and then cut them to transplant in disabled or needy patients. After the cut and paste operation they have to wait days (if not hours) until the regeneration applications launch the process of replacing new tissue, probably as easily at it now happens in wounds on a knife-cut finger's skin tissue.

Cultural acceptability and the fact of heavily populated areas will render the business equations of farming live human body parts cost-effective mostly in Asia. This is not to argue that all Easterners will be engaged in cutting and selling their body parts in 02060. However, the potential implications are intriguing. A new continent may emerge in which the males will be in excess (if not being the sole indigenous existing sex), most people will depend on their own body income for living, and instead of R(eceiving) & D(uplicating) the Western designed products, they begin to duplicate their bodies and sell designer babies.

Scenario 3: Asian-style technology-enabled all inclusive consciousness

Today we live in a data-driven world (Wolf, 2010). Information is everywhere and we are collecting information packages tiny and large almost every moment. While

the biotechnology age is going to shift our life quite soon the information age has already made a great impact on it. Pervasive sensors and ubiquitous access to information are among the top and vital technology applications that will continue to revolutionize the human experience.

Also, diverse small and big systems are helping us to more easily and rapidly go even more up in the hierarchy of knowledge and obtain even more deep knowledge and eventually wisdom. This in turn may contribute to the emergence of some really big leading thinkers whose intellectual output will eclipse the works and big ideas of polymaths of the ancient times. The accelerating progress of machine-aided human intelligence and enhanced consciousness has encouraged some futurists like Kurzweil (2005), among a dozen of others, to believe that we are approaching Singularity, beyond which the fabric of our civilization will be ruptured. Machine intelligence is bound to take over the place of human intelligence and continue to grow itself explosively afterward.

However, the dominant paradigm of making and using the information age systems and subsystems is inspired from the Western mechanical materialistic outlook. As a matter of fact we are used to produce and consume electro mechanical systems, on nano, mirco, and macro scales. Any tiny sensor has to have a chip inside. The usual dichotomy is defined around the silicon vs. carbon substrates. Machines are silicon based and human brains are carbon based while both are involved, currently in cooperation, gathering, processing, and sharing information.

Both in the old world and now in numerous underdeveloped countries half of the potential contributors to human experience was and has been left deliberately confined and thus untapped: the contribution of females. The West prides itself on releasing such a great momentum in human societies through some feminist movements and struggles during the past centuries. This mega trend will continue to spread across the world and will be enforced even more by future female participation in a perceptibly male dominant world. It is doubtless that active participation of women and their empowerment provided a major leap for societies' collective sense making, intelligence, and consciousness. The next major leap in collective consciousness may happen when a yet another quite untapped potential will be released: the contribution of fauna and flora.

In the Middle East Muslims are taught that fauna and flora really "understand" quite a lot and do worship Allah. But according to the Quran we cannot understand their language: "The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare." (See Surah 17 & Ayah 44). Also Solomon, the son of David, is on record saying "O ye people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things: this is indeed Grace manifest" (See Surah 27 & Ayah 16) and in a yet another scene it is narrated that when Solomon's army of humans, Jinni and birds" came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said: "O ye ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it" urging him to smile at what he just heard from it (See Surah 27, Ayat 18 & 19).

Moreover, respect for fauna and flora and to a larger extent the nature itself should be observed within the overwhelming Eastern philosophies and religions that adhere to the idea of reincarnation. People do not respect an animal per se or just for the sake of nature, rather because they are well convinced that they are showing respect to an ancestor or a recently transferred loved one, just embodied differently.

But having an audience with fauna and flora in a mystical fashion or in the world of pure fantasy is one thing and using reliable interface technology applications is another thing. The train of Enlightenment starting its journey some centuries ago from the West has been on a remarkable and powerful track of "demystification", giving the essential importance to validity and reliability. Scientifically proficient people resolved the problem of know-what and know-why and simultaneously turned into technologically proficient people solving the problem of know-how.

Nandy and Deshingkar (1993) support the idea that "culture confidence can change the technology paradigms" and thus define new directions. In their view, "incommensurablity of scientific paradigms, as among Western, Islamic, and Chinese, instead of posing a problem of sorting out which among them represents scientific truth, may then enrich the global scientific enterprise."

With the Western preoccupation and probably obsession with the nano, micro, and macro electro mechanical systems and the accelerating and explosive growth of human knowledge about the environment and genes it is probable that the scientific findings will soon pave the way for the emergence of the know-how of a reliable interface with fauna and flora. While the human translation profession is on the verge of extinction with the presence of useful machine translation applications like Google Translate that presumably are right on an exponential learning curve one should not be surprised that the next big thing will be that the fauna translation profession will be on rise.

This may lead to a paradigm shift from an electro mechanical set of lifeless systems and subsystems to a more nature adaptable all inclusive networks of live fauna and flora. Such networks maybe implemented through new infrastructures and interfaces eventually leading to improved and instant communication and collaboration among all forms of conscious entities. Eventually this will pave the way for the emergence of a "new intelligence culture" in Asia which has its own characteristics, was foreseen by Linzheng (1993), and in turn may shift the contemporary common identity of Asians.

Scenario 4: The Eastern brain trace dissolves in the path of human artificial evolution

Let's return to the East vs. West dichotomy. Sometimes it sounds as if we should read it Good vs. Evil. At least during the Cold War era it was often seen by many through such lenses and not surprisingly both Easterners and Westerners reserved the Good label for themselves. I have seen myself some claims that tend to picture the East as peaceful, favoring non violence, purely spiritual, nature lover, and so on. But these claims are not usually substantiated. True that there are some peculiar Eastern cultural norms, a number of them were mentioned above, but any myth that may lead

us to conclude that either the East or the West is the best and the other one is the worst should be busted.

Dividing people into two purely halves and opting to an either this or that mode of thinking dates back to the Greek philosophers, notably the logic founded by Aristotle. This logic not only rejects the possibility of contradictions such as the simultaneous existence of evil and good traits in things, entities, and persons but also does not recognize "the continuum" which is usually called "anything or whatever in between" the opposites.

One of the early deconstructionists who rebelled against the old logic and the absolute deductive reasoning in favor of "the fixed and certain" was the fourteenth century leading thinker, Ibn Khaldun. He accomplished a great mission and paved the way for the emergence of relativity based inductive reasoning in favor of "the changing and probable". To build his sociopolitical theory which was not based on the abstract Aristotle's logic and was quite down to the ground he started to attack it like a revolutionary. In his theory he first introduces the dichotomy of urban vs. desert dwellers and went on to explain that desert dwellers can be characterized as sincere, courageous and at the same time terribly violent and savage with high morals while urban dwellers are civilized, intelligent, and at the same time terribly dishonest and lazy with corrupt morals. It just depends on which angle you may use to observe them to see the evil or good part of their traits (Al Wardi, 2010).

To become realistic observers and analysts we need to discard the logic of Aristotle and instead adopt the logic of Ibn Khaldun. Asia even if is home to some shining past and present cultures and civilizations is also the land in which the majority of the world's remaining unelected, unrepresentative head of states still rule and resist Western style democracy, is the enclave of a notorious terrorist organization called Al Qaeda, and has registered a disgraceful record of suppressing personal and social freedoms and human rights let alone women rights.

Iran a year ago drew global attention to itself because of 2009 disputed presidential election and the violent campaigns on the streets. The trigger of such a tumult was a face off in a hot debate between the leaders of two radical camps. Inside one of them the anti-West anti civil society fundamentalists are united and inside the other one the pro-West liberals and allegedly the corrupt new rich are united (Motlagh, 2009). One camp tend to see adopting the Western memes an assured path toward future infection and death while their opponents see the same memes an assured path toward a healthy society and economy and a bright future.

The questions surrounding the formation and spread of traits and memes among human populations are too complex and most of them will remain unanswered for the time being. Nonetheless, empirical scientific findings may help us better understand the reasons behind some of the peculiar Eastern traits. Genetics play a key role in understanding the nature as opposed to the nurture aspect of the human experience. As biotechnology mature we will get answers.

Lieberman (2009), a cognitive psychologist, highlights the fact that Eastern and Western cultures nurture and reward, respectively, interdependence and independence values. In Eastern Asia "the nail that stands out gets pounded down" while in Western Europe "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." He points out that research is yielding

some new insights to this observation. In fact multiple studies have shown that there are significant difference between Easterners and Westerners' serotonin transporter gene (5 HTTLPR) three variants: short-short, long-short, and long-long. "Whereas two thirds of East Asians have the short-short variant, only one fifth of Americans and Western Europeans have it." Also multiple studies have demonstrated that the short-short variant individuals "from non supportive families and/or those who lack social support" have the greatest depression symptomology. According to Lieberman's conclusion, "the relative absence of this gene variant in the West would lead to a neurochemistry predisposing people to create a culture that values independence and individual achievement."

Taking into account the ready to implement germ line genetic applications and the future cheap genome sequencing technologies the above mentioned weak signal, assumes the technical feasibility, and may turn into a streamline business even before 02060. Genetically enabled peaceful application and even warfare variants may help dissolve the brain trace of either the East or the West. For example, without physically removing the Asians, their mentality, culture, and values will be wiped off the Earth.

Conclusion

Capturing all possibilities of Asia in the far beyond the present in the year 2060 or 3060 is both difficult and easy (in the sense of Ibn Khaldun logic) because it rests on the removal of some big anchors that preserve the present and past (which is difficult) and on pushing the limits of imagination (which is easy). Diverse futures studies schools and tools greatly help us loose the anchors and open new windows to re perceive the Asia's long term futures as well as make sense of its long gone past. To do so we need to identify and address trend breakers, weak signals, assumptions busters, and wild card scenarios that constitute and generate some images too powerful that people cannot easily ignore them.

While being essential for any useful longer term scenario building, WIM is a rather poorly understood cognitive mechanism. According to Weisberg (2009) creating and making sense of the fictional worlds and "let's pretend games" as opposed to sticking to the real world is an engine for learning that helps people take appropriate and useful lessons into reality without experiencing all imaginable possibilities.

In the fictional worlds pictured above the Asian identity are deconstructed in a way that the East physically will eat the whole world after the West may leave it for the space or when the West first manipulates the brain of the East through shifting its genes and next will eat the whole planet by spreading its memes. Even though such fictional worlds might seem now incredible the existing driving forces and mega trends suggest that the intriguing implications are worthwhile lessons for consideration and should be addressed now if nations and states are to decide and choose multiple courses of actions.

Also certain Eastern philosophies and cultural traits will help position Asia in the far away futures not only to more benefit commercially from the nanobiotechnology applications/products but also to shift the underlying paradigm itself. The shift will be from an electro mechanical set of lifeless systems and subsystems to a more nature

adaptable all inclusive networks of live fauna and flora. Such networks maybe implemented through new infrastructures and interfaces eventually leading to improved and instant communication and collaboration among all forms of conscious entities. This will pave the way for the emergence of a "new intelligence culture" in Asia which has its own characteristics and in turn may challenge and shift the contemporary common identity of Asians.

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Notes

1. The Iranian planning experts define Southwest Asia as to include countries in the Persian Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen), the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Turkey, Cyprus, Palestine, and Israel), Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan), Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) and the western part of the Indian Subcontinent (Afghanistan and Pakistan).
2. To watch the disgusting profession of cleaning, dressing and applying cosmetics to the body of a dead person, the Academy Award winner movie Departures directed by Yojiro Takita is highly recommended.
3. "Uncharted waters ahead" is a catchphrase I picked from the title of a seminal article in the scenario planning literature: Wack, Pierre (1985), Scenarios: uncharted waters ahead, Harvard Business Review, September-October.

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