

Asia's New Brand of Leadership: A New Asia Requires a New Philosophy?

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- To begin the discussion on a new leadership in Asia I would like to remind that we are currently in an era of an unpredicted situation of tectonic shift of transition in our life from analog generation to complex digital features –human emancipation and intellectual progress such as revolution of information and technology that challenge to the classical leadership in any government and business.
- Leadership transition in term of (1) inter-generational –the coming of younger generation and (2) in term of landscape (socio-technological, social progress) that requires a new type of leadership –require honesty, clear mind, moral, knowledge systems
- Here, I call the *RICT (Revolution in Information and Communications Technologies)* which give great impact to leadership and future generation of leaders. With the digital communication, we have to cope and pay attention to what Tom Friedman says as “flattening the world”. The role of social media is just an example how a group of virtually concern people could mobilize people power.
- Leaders need to be aware that we are entering era of instant access, speed and mobility, and technological challenge to gain of business system and e-government to Cloud Computing, the BigData and even the coming of 3D printing. The shrinking (if not) disappearance of distance is fact of life –everybody rush for speed. But the doom-side

we see the “fastest vs. the slowest” as a new gap in era of “broadband networked” economy.

- Within this landscape, there is almost no secrecy, and everything could be available on public domain. The online data access (such as the e-library) certainly closing the gap of information as any information could be accessed almost in real-time. And, our younger generation, are born as “digital natives”.
- Leaders, consequently have to face with more complexity of our systems of environment –local to global –socially, politically, economically etc. Asia in the process of leadership transition in terms of (1) (inter-generational –the coming of younger generation), and (2) in terms of landscape (socio-technological, social progress) that certainly, requires a new type of leadership.
- Also, the challenge of leadership will be coming from (1) Globalization (2). Growing Educated population, (3) Rise of social media, ICT revolution and “Information overload”
- Yet, Asia is very diverse culture, and far from being monolithic. To mention, Asian characters are generally recognized and characterized with: (1). Cultural diversity, (2). Inclusiveness, (3). Informality. Good and bad have been recorded in Asian history; where in the past (and partly still) dictatorship has produced fierce regimes, while civil-war has caused a lot of human disaster.
- Current modern history of Asia is currently referred to as the most dynamic region with high economic growth. While Europe is facing recession and the “relative decline of the U.S., Asian economy continues to grow and even, it plays more roles in global

economy (compare to other regions). Asian also contributes more to global GDP comparing to US and Western Europe.

- However, Asian leaders need to be aware the success of Asian economy (and development) needs to cope with rising number of population, depletion of natural resources due to over-exploitation for industrialization and risk of environmental degradation.
- The so-called of “dominant narratives” is come to an end. Leaders cannot create dominant narrative except in the continued authoritarians’ regimes, but, it will certainly finish in matter of time. Leaders cannot dictate, but what can be done is branding as generally practice in business and industry.
- Transparency and openness in information/knowledge challenge the hierarchy leadership, even in the military. The equal access to information has broken the barrier of knowledge and authority.
- In leadership context, the trait and strategy is not totally change, rather adapting/revolutionizing our philosophy on how do we think such things, and how intrinsically embed in our cognitive consciousness as a leader.
- If in the past, Asia were colonies systematically by colonial power, it is time for Asia to decolonize our way of thinking to move into more transparent and open mind, embrace the speed of change, and continue to innovate while engage with our community. New realities that leadership though the pursuit of knowledge in the complex systems dynamic of our era.

- Since the legitimacy of leader is challenged by speed of information, any leader need also to literate to the growing complexity of systems across local-international spectrum.
- We need also to develop more honest and cooperative approach, collaboration among Asian leaders to continue pioneering or better, saver and justice of our future generation and planet.
- Based on my experience and engagement in a big societal organization of Muhammadiyah, as the oldest and one of the largest community organizations in Indonesia, which is basically a cultural movement, I found what is still lacking in our current leadership is the Ethic of Philanthropy and humanitarian that could make our existence in this planet more useful for other. Business and leadership both suppose to be a vehicle to contribute best to our society, which is beyond border as "One humanity, One destiny, One responsibility.
- We need also to pay attention to prepare Asia to consolidate our future multicultural democracy. I also would like to emphasize that a new type of leadership –requires honesty and morality that comply with corporate good governance.
- In bringing progress to Asia, leaders need to see the West as a partner that could develop a win-win solution as a responsible human being. By advancing multicultural approach that relay on the rich of culture, promoting of Asian values must reside with the liberated principles of mankind and the West is a partner for progress.
- Finally, allow me to consider the relevannce of philosophy and thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, an educator and philosopher of education in Indonesia. By referring to his

thought, I would like to emphasize on the importance of wisdom, simplicity, and clarity in Asian leadership and provide philosophical necessity of modesty and justice. In Asian context of leader, no matter of how their advance, I think it is important to be modest in richness of our multi-cultural based which naturally inclusive.

- Ki Hajar Dewantara (d.1959). He lays foundation of the three principles of –*In Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani*. Meaning: *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo* (“in front by examples”). This means that someone who are in the front line or a leader, it should provide a good example/manner to its members. A leader will be seen by followers as a role model. Therefore, a leader should have characteristics that can be an example of role image to the follower –be an active leader. Meaning a leader is a person who inspire, lead, initiate, illuminate, and exemplify his/her followers, community or organization according to ideal norms, values or principle through knowledge, wisdom, and personality. Here, a leader is a pioneer, inspirator, mentor and living example of his/her people.
- *Ing Madyo Mangun Karso* (“in the middle builds up the spirit/and will”). This means that a leader must be able to put themselves in the middle of follower as encouragement, motivation, stimuli of innovation to the follower to be able to achieve better performance. It is clear that a leader must care and able to identify the needs follower. In current *flat world*, this type of leaders is terribly needed as hierarchical distance is getting less relevant. And –those three principles are interrelated and cannot be separated. Meaning a leader is a member or a part of a society, organization or team. He/she integrates and works with other members in order to empower, orchestrate, and organize goal achievement.

- Finally, *Tut Wuri Handayani* (“from behind to support”). Leader should not only encourage, but also provide support and direction for the organization's progress – leader needs to be able to exert efforts followers in line with the vision, mission and strategy of the organization. Meaning a leader is a follower or a student. He/she is a person who has commitment, obedience and belongingness of values, norms or principle of a respective society or organization. Here, a leader has openness, willingness and motivation to learn, accept, accommodates constructive ideas, criticism and valuable input for betterment, improvement and development. And – those three principles are interrelated and cannot be separated.