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special address / YBhg Dato Sri Rohani Abdul Karim

special guest / Prof. Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram

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YBhg Dato Sri Rohani Abdul Karim

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Special Address on Sustainable Development for Property Developers

YBhg. Dato Sri Rohani Abdul Karim | Adviser, SDG Society / Former Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Ladies and Gentlemen, Assalamualaikum w.b.t and Good Afternoon,

It is with great honour to discuss a topic that is not only close to my heart but is also critical to Malaysia's future: sustainable development. As someone who has had the privilege of serving the people of Batang Lupar in Sarawak, and as an advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), I bring to you insights from both my personal journey and our shared global vision for a sustainable future.

In the realm of property development, you will find yourselves at the crossroads of opportunity and responsibility. The decisions you make today will shape the world for generations to come. It is our duty to ensure that these decisions lead to a future where economic prosperity does not come at the expense of our planet or its people. I believe there are three key SDGs that we should focus on: Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Climate Action (SDG 13), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). However, it is crucial to understand that these SDGs cannot be seen in isolation. They are interlinked and interconnected, each influencing and supporting the others in our journey towards sustainable development. SDG 11 urges us to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, emphasising the importance of green public spaces, affordable housing, and sustainable urbanisation. 6. SDG 13 calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, reminding us, especially in the property development sector, to incorporate strategies that reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience to climate-related hazards. SDG 17 highlights the power of partnerships and collaborative efforts to achieve the SDGs. It stresses the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources.

By integrating these SDGs into our business models and project designs, we can contribute to a sustainable future for all. The synergy among these goals enables us to address the complex challenges of sustainable development more effectively and ensures that our efforts in one area support progress in others. In line with our national ambition, Malaysia has set a bold target to become carbon neutral by 2050. This commitment, part of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, is a testament to our country's dedication to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 45% by 2030, in accordance with the Paris Agreement. This ambitious goal underscores the critical role that every sector of our economy, including property development, plays in achieving a sustainable future.

EMBEDDING SDG PRINCIPLES IN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now, the question is how do we embed the principles of the SDGs into your operations? Property developers must undertake a multifaceted approach that aligns with global sustainability objectives while also meeting local needs and aspirations. This integration requires a commitment to innovation, stakeholder engagement, and a long-term vision for development that transcends traditional practices.

Firstly, developers should prioritise **sustainability from the outset of their projects**. This means considering the environmental impact of their developments and seeking ways to minimise carbon footprints through the use of renewable energy, sustainable materials, and efficient waste management systems. Green 4 building certifications, such as LEED or Green Mark, can serve as benchmarks for sustainability standards.

Secondly, **community engagement and social inclusion** are crucial. Developers must ensure that their projects not only contribute to economic growth but also enhance the social fabric of the communities within which they operate. This involves creating inclusive spaces that are accessible to all, promoting social equity, and ensuring that development projects contribute positively to the local community's well being.

Moreover, **innovation and technology** play pivotal roles in achieving sustainable outcomes. Smart technologies can optimise energy use, reduce waste, and improve the overall quality of life for residents. Property developers should invest in innovative solutions that promote sustainability, from construction techniques to the integration of smart home technologies.

Partnerships and Collaboration are also vital for embedding SDGs into property development. Developers should actively seek partnerships with government bodies, NGOs, the local community, and other stakeholders. These collaborations can provide access to new insights, technologies, and funding opportunities that can drive sustainable development forward.

Furthermore, **transparency and accountability** are key. Developers should commit to reporting their sustainability performance, using metrics that align with the SDGs. This not only holds companies accountable but also builds trust with consumers, investors, and the wider community.

Resilience and Adaptation to climate change must also be considered. Developers need to design and construct buildings and communities that are resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events and 5 rising sea levels. This involves considering future climate conditions in the planning and design stages, rather than just the current environment.

Lastly, **economic sustainability** is equally important. While environmental and social aspects often receive more attention, economic sustainability ensures that projects are viable in the long term, providing jobs, stimulating local economies, and contributing to the financial well-being of the community and investors alike.

APPGM SDG MAPPING OF LOCAL NEEDS

Ladies and gentlemen,

In many low-cost flats and PPRs, the rubbish collection system has been in need of up-grading to ensure efficiency. Effective collaboration is key. Hence, it is essential to raise the awareness of the residents about the cleanliness of their living environment, so that they can work together with the local authorities, in ensuring the cleanliness of their environment is maintained.

We found low-cost flats and PPRs that are branded as the darkest areas within the constituency because of the rampant cases of gangsterism, drug abuse, and vandalism. Drug abuse is often associated with young people and sometimes even children, which raises concern especially on the prospects of future generations. For example, in one of the flats we did research, the pressure of financial difficulties, lack of employment opportunities, and often the lack of recreational spaces are often co-related significantly with their involvement in such crimes. Incidents of gender-based violence often occur which are related to closely with drugs and alcohol abuse. Women also often expressed concerns about safety walking home from work, even within the short distance between the bus stop to their doorsteps.

We have seen good examples of transformation in certain flats, for example, where effective partnerships between the local residential groups, government, and civil society have made the living environment more conducive for the residents. These are the testimonies of the importance of strengthening the SDG17.

CALL TO ACTION

By embedding the principles of the SDGs into their business models, property developers can spearhead the creation of a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future. This endeavour necessitates a paradigm shift, viewing sustainability not as an additional expense but as a valuable investment in the future, promising substantial returns for developers, society, and the planet alike. Embracing this perspective aligns with the triple bottom line of People, Planet, and Profit, ensuring that our advancements contribute positively to social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic viability. It also resonates with the principles of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), guiding developers towards practices that are not only eco-friendly and resilient but also equitable and profitable. Together, let's champion innovation, creating spaces that thrive on efficiency and sustainability. By joining hands in this transformative journey, we lead the way towards a greener, more sustainable Malaysia, benefitting generations to come. Let this commitment to the triple bottom line and ESG principles drive us forward, embodying change in our projects and operations for a better tomorrow

2024 Malaysian Housing, Urban Development and Property Summit.

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Navigating AI Disruption: The Case for an ASEAN Tech Ambassador

Zaim Mohzani | Senior Director of External Affairs

Nations around the globe are increasingly recognizing the strategic importance of engaging directly with the digital and technological sphere. The emergence of Tech and Digital Ambassadors is a testament to this new diplomatic innovation, marking a pivotal shift in how countries navigate the complexities of the digital age. This trend underscores the pressing need for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to appoint its own Technology Envoy, aligning with global movements to safeguard interests and foster international cooperation in technology.

The Global Landscape of Tech Diplomacy

Denmark set a groundbreaking precedent in 2017 by appointing the world's first Tech Ambassador, signaling a new era in diplomatic representation that extends beyond traditional borders and into Silicon Valley. This pioneering move was not merely symbolic but a clear acknowledgment of the tech industry's colossal impact on national and global affairs. Denmark's initiative has since inspired other nations to follow suit, recognizing the indispensable role of technology in shaping our world.

France, for instance, has also introduced a Digital Ambassador, highlighting the country's commitment to addressing digital challenges on a global scale, from internet governance to cybersecurity.

Notably, Australia has appointed an Ambassador for Cyber Affairs and Critical Technology, underscoring its commitment to cyber diplomacy and the safe and responsible management of critical technology on an international scale. This role highlights the importance of international collaboration in addressing cyber threats and promoting the benefits of digital transformation for economic growth and security.

In the United States, the establishment of the Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy further exemplifies the growing recognition of digital and cyber domains as crucial areas of national and international policy. This position reflects a strategic approach to shaping global norms and policies for cyberspace, the digital economy, and emerging technologies, ensuring that the U.S. remains a key player in global digital policy discussions.

The Case for an ASEAN Tech Envoy

Given the precedent set by Denmark, France, Australia, and the United States, the establishment of an ASEAN Tech Envoy is not just a forward-thinking proposal but a necessary step toward regional resilience and prosperity in the digital era.

ASEAN, a region known for its dynamic economic growth and technological adoption, stands to significantly benefit from having a dedicated representative to navigate the intricacies of technology governance, data sovereignty, and digital economy.

The recent advancements in AI policy by Singapore, as part of its National AI Strategy (NAIS 2.0), further emphasize the region's potential for leadership in ethical and sustainable technology deployment. Singapore's commitment to becoming a global hub for AI innovation, focusing on responsible AI use, provides a strong foundation for ASEAN's collective digital strategy. By advocating for a unified ASEAN AI policy, the Tech Envoy could ensure that the region remains at the forefront of digital innovation, ethics, and governance.

Towards a Unified ASEAN Digital Strategy

The global trend of appointing Tech and Digital Ambassadors exemplifies the growing recognition of technology's central role in diplomacy, national security, and economic development. For ASEAN, embracing this diplomatic innovation means more than just staying competitive. It represents a commitment to harnessing the power of technology for societal benefit, ensuring digital inclusivity, and safeguarding the region against the challenges of the digital age.

The ASEAN Tech Envoy would, therefore, not only symbolize the region's collective ambition in the digital world but also serve as a vital coordinator for regional policy-making, innovation collaboration, and international tech dialogue. By drawing on the experiences of other nations' Tech Ambassadors and Singapore's leading role in AI governance, ASEAN can carve out a path that balances technological advancement with ethical considerations, ensuring a digital future that benefits all its citizens.

In conclusion, the appointment of a Technology Envoy by ASEAN is a critical step in acknowledging and engaging with the transformative power of technology on a global scale. By doing so, ASEAN will join the ranks of visionary nations that have already recognized the importance of this new domain of diplomacy, ensuring that the region remains resilient, innovative, and forward-looking in the digital age.

Rich Nations, IMF Deepen World Stagnation

Prof. Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram was the UN Assistant Secretary-General during 2005-15 and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007.

With the US Fed raising interest rates, the world economy is slowing as debt distress spreads across the global South, increasing poverty worldwide to pre-pandemic levels, with the poorest countries faring worst.

Extreme poverty continues to be high and is now worse than before the pandemic in low-income countries (LICs) and among those affected by fragility, violence and conflict. The promise of eradicating poverty worldwide by 2030 has become unachievable.

The Bretton Woods institutions' (BWIs) annual meetings in Marrakech in October were only the second-ever in Africa. But the rich nations-dominated BWIs failed yet again to rise to the challenges of our times, setting Africa and the global South even further back.

Instead of fostering cooperation to address the causes and effects of the contemporary catastrophe, neither the International Monetary Fund nor the World Bank governors could agree on joint communiques due to the greater politicisation of multilateral fora.

Indebtedness immobilises governments

Indebtedness and restrictive creditor rules prevent governments from spending more counter-cyclically to overcome the many contractionary tendencies of recent times, besides preventing them from addressing looming social and environmental crises.

The G20's largest twenty economies have urged strengthening "multilateral coordination by official bilateral and private creditors … to address the deteriorating debt situation and facilitate coordinated debt treatment for debt-distressed countries".

But its Common Framework to restructure debt has been roundly criticised by civil society, think tanks and even the World Bank on many grounds, including the paltry concessional credit relief offered to a few of the very poorest countries.

In contrast, the G24 caucus of developing countries at the BWIs has emphasised the need for "durable debt resolution measures while collaborating on resolving the structural issues leading to such vulnerabilities."

But all those advocating purported solutions are not even trying to ensure fiscal space and public spending capacity for counter-cyclical efforts, let alone achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and national development objectives.

Surcharges

The IMF currently imposes additional charges on countries that do not quickly clear their debts to the Fund. Besides the usual fees and interest, borrowing countries paid over $4 billion in such surcharges in 2020-22, during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Surcharges will cost debt-distressed countries about $7.9 billion over six years. The G24 has emphasised that surcharges are pro-cyclical and regressive, especially with monetary tightening.

Governments have undertaken contractionary policies and cut imports for lack of foreign exchange. This deepens the problems of heavily indebted poor countries who cannot but count on the Fund for relief and solutions.

At Marrakech, the governing International Monetary and Financial Committee decided to "consider a review of surcharge policies". The G24 called for "a suspension of surcharges while the review – which we hope will lead to substantial permanent reduction or complete elimination – is being conducted."

Rich nations have been divided over surcharges. With Ukraine now among the top surcharge payers, following civil society criticisms, the Biden administration's refusal to review surcharges in 2022 was heavily criticised by the US Congress.

Deepening austerity

IMF fiscal austerity measures of the 1980s returned with a vengeance after the 2008 global financial crisis, and then again during the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020. Most Fund loans require cutting the public sector wage bill (PSWB), the budget line to pay employees.

Most wage earners in many LICs, including nurses, teachers and other social service workers, work for the state, directly or indirectly. Although much needed, these employees have been more likely to be targeted by such budget cuts.

PSWB cuts may involve hiring or wage freezes, or limiting, or even cutting wages. These inevitably undermine government capacities and services. Fiscal consolidation has also involved raising more indirect, consumption taxes, and tax exemptions, e.g., for essential goods such as food.

In 38 countries with over a billion people, loan conditionalities during 2020-22, the three years of the Covid-19 pandemic, meant regressive tax reforms and public spending cuts. PSWB and fuel or electricity subsidy cuts are also common demands worsening economic contractions.

Austerity bound to fail

But the IMF's own research suggests such austerity policies are generally ineffective in reducing debt, their ostensible purpose. The April 2023 IMF World Economic Outlook acknowledged austerity programmes and fiscal consolidations "do not reduce debt ratios, on average". Yet, its Fiscal Monitor still demands "fiscal tightening" of most developing countries.

The new IMF-World Bank debt sustainability framework sets the LICs' external debt-to-GDP ratio limit at 30% or 40%. It insists debt-distressed economies must have lower ratios than 'strong' countries, effectively further penalising the weak and vulnerable.

Instead of enabling consistently counter-cyclical macroeconomic frameworks, the IMF's current short-termist approach is mainly preoccupied with annual, or worse, quarterly balances, mimicking corporate reporting practices.

Such short-termism further limits fiscal space, effectively preventing or deterring public sector investments requiring longer-term macroeconomic frameworks to realise benefits. This discourages 'patient' medium- to long-term investments required for national economic planning and transformation, essential for sustainable development.

Restrictive debt and fiscal targets have meant even less public investment. This is typically required of borrowing countries as a credit conditionality. Annual IMF Article IV consultations cause other countries to also accept similar constraints to avoid Fund disapproval.

While a few better-off economies enjoy full employment, most countries face further economic contraction, not least due to interest rate hikes led by the US Fed and their many effects. Instead of being part of the problem, the IMF should be part of the solution.

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AI and What Does Disruption Mean to Us (humans)

Luqman Al-Hakim | Research & Communications Executive

The conversation around artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on the future of work is both urgent and complex. At the heart of this discourse lies a critical exploration of how AI reshapes the traditional dynamics of labor, production, and consumption, inviting us to reconsider the very foundation of our economic systems.

AI, in essence, is not merely a technological advancement; it is a transformative force that challenges the conventional roles of human labor and capital. Unlike the tools and machines of the industrial era, which augmented human capabilities, AI introduces a paradigm where work and productivity are increasingly independent of human intervention. This shift, while promising remarkable efficiency and output, also raises profound questions about the balance between production and consumption, the distribution of wealth, and the future of employment.

Historically, the capitalist economy has operated on a delicate equilibrium: individuals sell their labor for wages, which in turn enables them to consume the goods they produce. This cycle relies on the balance of compensation sufficient to sustain consumption while ensuring profitability for capitalists. However, the integration of AI and automation into production processes threatens to disrupt this balance. As machines that do not consume replace human labor, we are confronted with a paradox: a surge in production capacity alongside a potential decline in consumption due to reduced employment and wages.

The implications of this shift extend far beyond the immediate economic calculations of efficiency and profit. They touch upon the core contradictions of capitalism itself - the tension between the expansive capabilities of production and the limitations of market-based consumption. In a world dominated by AI and automation, the question becomes; who will purchase the abundance of goods produced when the workforce is increasingly marginalized?

The potential crisis of overproduction and underconsumption is not merely a speculative future but a reflection of the inherent instabilities within capitalist economies. It underscores the urgency of reimagining the relationship between work, value, and social organization in an age where technological capabilities challenge the traditional premises of economic and social structures.

This is an uncharted territory for humanity, and the role of AI in both exacerbating and potentially resolving these contradictions becomes increasingly critical. The promise of AI to liberate humanity from the drudgery of labor presents an opportunity to redefine the notions of work, leisure, and societal well-being. Yet, without a conscious effort to address the distributive implications of AI-driven productivity and the era of 'post-work', we risk deepening the chasms between the inequality and alienation inherent in capitalist societies.

The march towards a post-work era, facilitated by the maturation of AI, demands not only technological innovation but also a radical rethinking of economic and social policies. Concepts such as universal basic income, equitable distribution of wealth, and new forms of democratic engagement emerge as potential pathways to ensure that the benefits of AI are shared broadly, rather than concentrated in the hands of a few. The task ahead is not merely to adapt to the inevitabilities of technological progress but to actively shape a future where technology serves the common good, fostering a society that values human well-being above the imperatives of profit and growth.

Shifting Economic Paradigm with Mr Jeremy Lim

Mr Jeremy Lim is a writer and editor at Jentayu, a progressive writing collective, and the secretary of Imagined Malaysia, a public history organization.

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your background and expertise in analyzing economic systems, particularly focusing on the concept of political capitalism within the Malaysian context?

To some extent, I am a self-taught development economist and political theorist. My first degree was in mechanical engineering before pivoting to a master's in development studies at the University of Cambridge in 2021. Before that master's, I had read and researched the middle-income trap in Malaysia as part of my job and academic interest, as well as read from various socialist and heterodox economists. My dissertation was on delineating the periods of Malaysian development and analysing the economic and political contradictions within them that led to new economic phases.

I recently started looking into 'political capitalism' after two sociologists sparked a debate about the US political and economic system. They defined this term as a new regime of accumulation for the US, one in which "raw political power, rather than productive investment, is the key determinant of the rate of return." I didn't agree with their diagnosis but I thought this adage was truer in Malaysia where the popular perception was that political connections could make or break your business.

2. Can you provide insights into the prevailing business and economic practices in Malaysia, particularly regarding its focus on labor-intensive industries? What factors contribute to Malaysia's tendency to prioritize such industries over tapping into more advanced sectors?

No one can really blame businesses for staying away from risk when what they want is stability and predictability. In most cases, safe and stable sectors are those that would be more labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive — sectors like construction, plantations, hospitality and retail. Advanced sectors like precision manufacturing that require the use of robotic assembly lines and clean rooms are extremely capital-intensive and risky given the economies of scale involved. If one decides to build up a semiconductor fabrication firm from scratch, one would have to consider that returns on that investment might not be seen for decades, or never be seen at all given the competition out there globally. Its not really more complicated than that.

Governments, in the interest of developing national industries, would usually step in to subsidise expenditure into these riskier but more long-run rewarding sectors. Economist Ha-Joon Chang like to bring up the fact that Alexander Hamilton back in 1791 was already thinking in terms of industrial policy through the setting up of a national bank to promote manufacturing.

The Malaysian government did this for a time until it retreated after the 1985 recession and relied on foreign capital from East Asia to incentivise industrialisation, then they mostly fled after the Asian Financial Crisis. Now, the incentives to develop capital-intensive manufacturing for advanced product categories are few and far between.

3. Why do you think Malaysia finds it challenging to transition towards advanced industries despite efforts to diversify its economy? Are there specific barriers or constraints that hinder the development of advanced sectors within the Malaysian context?

I think it's because we now live in a world where many of the most advanced segments of manufacturing have a few dominant players that have stuck around far longer than they should have. New entries into fields like cars and semiconductors are becoming rarer and rarer. The only entrants are players who have massive state backing like BYD and Tesla. The days of the flying geese model of industrial development are long gone; Japan, Korea and Taiwan never gave up and passed down their productive capacity in the automotive and electronics sectors to the next generation (Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia). Malaysia for a time believed it was following in their footsteps but after the Asian Financial Crisis, policymakers and industrialists here had a rude awakening to the new reality of the model being broken.

For Malaysia, it seems like after the Crisis, the policy sphere has never returned to the idea of industrialisation, and specifically heavy industrialisation seriously. It feels like they consider it a war they have thoroughly lost. That was also the height of the neoliberal era – heading into the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis – when any government interference was all bad and markets were all good so policymakers here were also influenced by that. All the talk about the digital economy was rather premature to me given that we didn't have a critical mass of skilled workers who could transition us to the digital stage of development. Globally now, there is more openness to discuss industrial policy again with the qualified success of China moving beyond its cheap manufacturing to advanced sectors and the Biden administration's efforts with reshoring under the Inflation Reduction Act. The Malaysian government should consider picking one or two sectors and betting big on them to generate our comparative advantage in the global market.

4. How does the status quo of prioritizing labor-intensive industries over advanced sectors affect the economic well-being of the Malaysian people? Are there disparities or shortcomings in terms of job quality, income distribution, or overall economic growth resulting from this approach?

One of the most striking ways this shows up in the national statistics is the labour share of income which stood at 32.4% of GDP. Even a country as unequal as the United States has a labour share of income of 69%. This figure for Malaysia translates to low wages for the vast majority of Malaysians. This has stemmed largely from the lack of unionisation, 5.8% of the workforce and less than 2% of the workforce covered by collective agreements.This lack also means greater precarity for workers in terms of job protections and democratic participation in production.

Historically, trade unions would fight employers for higher wages and generate an indirect incentive for firms to invest more in labour-saving machines. While this certainly reduces the number of jobs available overall, the remaining jobs will be of greater quality in terms of physical toll on the body and wages, and increase economic productivity – measured as output per worker. Aside from these, the now higher-skilled workers are more likely to start their own spinoffs or subcontracting firms. All of these effects of greater unionisation benefit the economy as a whole.

5. Shifting gears, there's a growing discourse around empowering local municipal elections as a means to drive economic development at the grassroots level. How do you see this approach potentially reshaping the economic landscape in Malaysia, particularly in terms of job creation and community empowerment?

I think decentralising decision-making would be the best way to ensure more even economic growth rather than have it all centred around Klang Valley and Penang. If municipalities were empowered to develop infrastructure and social services that help them grow their niche industries, Malaysian workers would be better off. Other countries have experimented with participatory budgeting where residents of a town or municipality gather up demands and requests for things like road repairs, a new bridge or community centre, and more community engagements. Democratic practices like these allow residents to become invested in the future of their town and become more aware of how it can be steadily enhanced. All this would allow for more responsive governance to build and recirculate community wealth as in the Preston Model.

6. Building upon the concept of local empowerment, what specific job roles or sectors do you envision being expanded or introduced through such initiatives? How can the government leverage local resources and talents to create diverse job opportunities beyond the traditional labor-intensive industries?

My first go-to on this is nearly always food and agriculture, just because its demand is largely inelastic – everyone needs to eat no matter where you are in the country. On this count, I think the government has the right idea by putting a lot of funding into smart farming and trying to make agriculture appealing to young people. You may see a temporary rise in the price of food items but that would in the medium term be balanced out by the increase in incomes.

Small producers in rural spaces cannot compete with the economies of scale needed to make things like nails, wooden boards or plastic tools. But for food, shortening the time and distance food needs to travel from its production site to a plate creates a lot of economic value and also tremendous nutritional benefits. Nearly all localities used to grow something before other industries displaced them. Local and indigenous knowledge could be retrieved to enhance farming efforts, combined with a minimal degree of automation and mechanisation. Local governments can subsidise or loan equipment to new farmers to help them kickstart their initiatives in exchange for a portion of the harvest. Communities can work with local municipal offices to develop cooperatives and institutions that generate demand for the produce, either within the district or outside. Other products and sectors that might work in this way would be traditional handicrafts, furniture and other artisanal goods.

7. Could you provide examples of non-traditional job roles that could be prioritized under a strategy focused on empowering local communities? How might roles such as town psychologist/psychiatrist, early childhood education provider, or town cleaner contribute to both economic prosperity and social well-being?

Town planners and urbanists would be the first thing that comes to mind. Second would be social workers and non-school educators. There is plenty of talk about the coming aging population crisis but very few plans or actions to address it seriously. Both these sets of professions would help with the crisis and further deepen community wealth within small towns and villages. Many of these communities lack the basic services needed to raise a family, childcare, education, healthcare, and functional green spaces.

Paying for these jobs to kickstart the rejuvenation process will have to come from the government coffers and taxes but in time, these communities would hopefully be able to generate revenues from the non-traditional sectors like agriculture, tourism and artisanal goods. I envision there would have to be some degree of relocating the elderly closer to towns and cities so that social services are easier to access but the stress of that move could be alleviated by good urban planning and design.

8. From a practical standpoint, what are the feasibility considerations associated with implementing initiatives aimed at expanding non-traditional job sectors in Malaysia? Are there potential challenges or obstacles that need to be addressed in order to realize this vision?

Any policy will encounter short-term trade-offs or deliver pain to certain sectors or groups of people. An initiative to grow food locally within a town or municipality could hurt retailers and distributors in the short run while they adjust to the drop in demand. It will take time for the greater incomes from wealthier smart farmers to generate demand for new goods and services within the area. Policymakers would do well to think about the first-, second-and third-order effects of specific interventions and plan for them as best they can. I don't expect them to predict everything but planning for the worst and learning from the mistakes of others is how to minimize the damage to ordinary Malaysians.

Plans that genuinely alters people's way of life require a ton of research and extensive consultation. Now what we have is developers decide what people should want and building it, hoping that locals buy into it rather than asking them. If policies are capable of being responsive, I feel pretty certain that people will pitch in more about what they want and hope to see.

9. How do you anticipate these alternative job creation strategies impacting overall economic growth and development in Malaysia? Are there potential synergies or trade-offs between fostering non-traditional job sectors and sustaining growth in existing industries?

At the moment, I do think we have surplus labour that should be absorbed into these non-traditional sectors. We could certainly afford fewer people to be delivery riders for food and parcels, and more of them in smart agriculture or artisanal goods — I'm thinking more of production rather than just retail here, social services and niche tourism. These can generate overall economic growth through productive and care-based services but there will likely be smaller margins. In the absence of adequate levels of profitability, the government must step in to prevent a further spiral of depopulation in small towns and villages. Again, there may be short term pain from adjustment in demand and supply chains but on the whole it still means more economic activity and higher incomes.

10. As we wrap up our discussion, what do you see as the key priorities or next steps for Malaysia in terms of reimagining its economic strategies and promoting inclusive growth? Are there specific policy recommendations or initiatives that you believe should be pursued to achieve these objectives?

I will not even need to go as far as a reimagining because I think a return to industrial policy is needed and much more acceptable now than ever before. We have relied for far too long on the market to deliver better public goods and greater inclusive development, and it has not played out as many hoped. The government will have to step in to push markets and firms to fulfil development objectives like revitalising rural and suburban communities, creating high-skill jobs and building strategic industries. Whether it should be an inward- or outward-looking approach to production, I am more with Prof Jomo about giving more priority to the national economy rather than just exports and foreign direct investment. There is evidence in the gross fixed capital formation numbers – a good substitute for investment within the economy – that there is plenty of local capital to be mobilized if the government can create the right conditions to induce investment domestically.

11. Lastly, is there any final insight or message you would like to share regarding the intersection of economic development, community empowerment, and government policies in Malaysia's evolving economic landscape?

In Malaysia and unlikely parts of the West, people do not need to be reminded that politics and economics are interconnected and quite inseparable. However, in our context, many Malaysians only think about the two subjects exclusively in terms of corruption and cronyism. I would encourage people to think more deeply about how politics and the state or government shape our everyday lives, how we decide our work and consumption, and how much leisure time and freedom we have. What I mentioned earlier about local governance and expanding community wealth is a clear example of how municipal politics can play a positive role in society.

A Country Divided?
Go to War.

Elisha Patmon | Youth Lead KSI

War is seen as a tricky subject because of the permeating loss that is associated with it. The destruction it poses is like no other even if it encourages social changes - for good or for worse. Positive changes are few such as the Women's rights movements that subsequently came out of WW1 and WW2, but regardless, it remains a force to be reckoned with, and how much that conflict shapes society for decades to come. When a country is in the middle of political instability, unrest, or a straightforward power grab, it does well for the morale and patriotism of them to go to war. It seems archaic, but this tactic is used. This article does not explore those principalities, but defines the specific action in place that makes part of war feasible in the first place; warmongering.

Warmongering is a product of war; before it and after. It is categorized as "the act of encouraging a country to go to war or of threatening violence against another country:" . To advocate for such wreckage and destruction is associated with old thinking. We do not live in a middle kingdom that needs protecting from a dragon that needs to be slain, hence going to war for the sake of the land or for honor. There are very few instances within history where that level of conflict is valid, where most had the general consensus that it needed to happen in order to restore the world to a justified balance. But besides those very few times, war cannot be justified and neither can warmongering because of the toll it creates.

The evolution of warmongering can be explained by history; in the new ages of contemporary democracy in the early 1900's that saw uprisings, insurgencies, and overthrows to cement more sovereign ideas that regarded people as people, and not subjects or disposable, things have changed dramatically. What is important is that the definition does not apply to the same principalities that chronicled the world for the past decade. In the age of technology, the internet, interconnection, and globalization, the ramifications and consequences of the definition are completely different. The loss of human life starts to take center stage and rightly so. Whilst there have been protests in the past that vehemently go against the prospect of war in the first place (like Vietnam), the toll for such atrocities is higher and more pertinent in a world that lives where we can see that at our fingertips.

The loss of human life is very real and an extreme variable, as well as the population, ages, socio-economic status, and foreign policy to name a few. Gone are the days of invading for the sake of invading under the guise of sovereignty - there now needs to be a level of meticulousness that is present and that simple saying does not account for how attitudes have changed or retained based on the wars fought in contemporary history. "They have a right to protect themselves" is a statement that is used far and wide to supplement most conversations excusing invasion and war. Whilst that can ring true in smaller and individual cases, when you talk about conflict on such a big, premeditated, and structured

scale where millions of people are involved, it does not become that easy. Things haven't gotten more complicated over the years, things have become easier to access and the encouragement to grow is rooted in more, who did not have a voice before, finding it and using it to point out inconsistencies that they themselves have experienced or for the sake of others. We do not progress if we pander to the old ideologies that war is as simple as taking back something; the basis is embroiled in the politics of today and the identities of many, and we cannot employ this type of thinking.

It makes people erratic, systems even more paranoid, and produces a new slew of people thinking that they can condense topics that require intensive research which leads to misinformation. Not only is it used as an intimidation tactic by bigger countries to bully smaller countries into rallying for their own special interest, but it also creates a lot of friction within the political stage and their own populations. Without a solid foundation as to why warmongering is bad, there is no conversation that can supplement it that will not lead to a theory of why war can be used as a justification when it shouldn't.

An 'out to get us' mentality is created and a scramble ensues to pick up arms to fight for something that has murky undertakings at best. Very real and devastating consequences follow, such as the utter disaster that was in Afghanistan. Regardless of what the war was fought for in the first place, the ramifications of warmongering that country turned into political theater, with ideals for a new democratic center in middle Asia. It was said by the then-American Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, that nation-building and essentially "owning" parts of Afghanistan were a futile effort that was sure to be met with copious amounts of resistance. He was right. The Afghanistan War was supposed to be a direct response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001. Instead, it became a vortex of millions of dollars lost, a crumbling infrastructure that the UK and US contributed to, and an irresponsible leaving of the country they helped destroy in the first place, sanctions are now choking the life out of the ones that were not complicit in the violent jargon to begin with: the people.

The Iraq war followed shortly after, with the beginnings of a United States-led coalition to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. When Congress realized the toll that the war was taking on America's finances and the research that came out that deemed Iraq free of weapons of mass destruction that they had previously thought, George W Bush, the president at the time, vetoed Congress's decision. The majority consensus in Congress had wanted to withdraw American troops and Bush was completely against that, citing that the situation on the ground was not taken into account. Under the guise of a new command and more attacks, Bush made the decision to go against the wishes of elected officials, their constituents, and essentially the entire population five years into the war yielded no results but crying mothers, dead children, and lies. A decision that culminated in Afghanistan- using the anger that the American people had towards the terror attack and warping it to make sure it was placed on something else. A rash abruptness as people and officials were calling for some type of retaliation, without understanding the consequences.

America exploited that hurt to fuel a wrongly guided hate against a people within a country that had nothing to do with what happened. The Iraq War is an exemplification of how warmongering was pandered to a fearful population, and misinformation was spread to constitute their less-than-terrific dealings abroad back to the American people, and the world. Even in lieu of the protests that first began - which then gained momentum - the Iraq War is a testament to the horrific effects of warmongering and what it has done to not only the general population of the Iraqi people but the cracks it has displayed within the American government.

Warmongers distort discussion and harbor fear to verify their claims; there is something to be said about people who are selfishly using the idea that the general consensus does not understand, nor will subscribe to that line of critical theory. An elitism hangs in the balance of that for sure, but what is more pertinent is the simple greed that takes over supplements the few, and outright causes the devastation of many. Special-interest extremists only look to a very specific reason that usually benefits a group of individuals. They seek to resolve specific issues, rather than tackle a more widespread problem that the general population may abide by.

Warmongering was never intended to be a positive thing for the population; it was intended to be used against them for the gain of a few and to serve their own interests, causing chaos in return that has violent ramifications and a loss of life. Within the nucleus of things are questions; we need to question why these images are being projected out to us and the timing of such. If we do not question, we will continue to be in wars and participate in propaganda that we then regret down the line for a sin we cannot atone for.

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