

Dynamics of Development and Communication



By
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In response to the article, 'The New International Information Order' by Neville D. Jayaweera, this paper seeks to widen the analytic paradigm underlying Brandt, Bergesen and the theories of the World Development Movement, in order to provide an overarching framework for holistic human development at a global level. The question is raised as to whether religious institutions may not actually be sustaining those very dynamics of human behaviour which generate the damaging patterns of splitting, oppression, exploitation and retaliation.

Produced By: Meridian Programme, Meridian House, 115 Poplar High Street, London E14 0AE
Hosted By: Unit for Research into Changing Institutions (URCHIN), Charity Reg. No. 284542
Web-site: www.meridian.org.uk

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[‘The New International Information Order - What have the churches to say?’ by Neville D. Jayaweera - some responsive notes]

Any proposals for change in the status quo (like those contained in the Brandt report or those supporting the demand for the New International Information Order) presuppose the identification of some problem in the status quo which needs solving, an analysis of the causes of the problem, together with the claim that the proposed interventions will generate sufficient shift in the causal system which will in turn lead to the required solution of the presenting problem. To carry any weight therefore proposals must be clearly founded at the levels of problem identification, causal system analysis and likely system responses to any given set of interventions. Similarly, any critique of a set of proposals must also operate at this level.

It is important to distinguish between system analysis that emerges from a set of theoretical assumptions and a system analysis which is exposed from a study of empirical phenomena. The first position imposes the analysis which is itself derived from a mental model inherent in the theoretical assumptions and presuppositions. The generating construct is cerebral and has the character of fantasy, in other words, it may or may not correspond to the empirical realities - that is yet to be tested. The second approach starts with those empirical realities and treats the theoretical position as a secondary construct, more or less helpful as a shorthand way of describing the observed phenomena. The first position leads to an analysis which is an imposition of ideology and shapes the data to conform to the assumptive base, the second position represents an analytic exposition of the empirical data base in the light of which any theoretical formulation may have to be adjusted, revised or even completely overthrown and reformulated.

The second approach (which may be broadly described as 'scientific') also has its ideology, assumptions and presuppositions. It sees understanding emerging from reflection on information culled from engagement with a concrete environment and is to be distinguished from the position which views understanding as derived from a particular ideology, such as the writings of a Buddha, or a Chairman Mao, a Marx or Mohammed. It is also to be distinguished from the position which attributes understanding to the Godhead and sees wisdom as in some sense revealed by grace. In the depths that lie behind the choice of system employed we run into fundamental differences in the way human beings relate with their world, the degrees to which their world view is dominated by phantasy and projection or by reality-testing, the degrees to which their understanding of the world is dependent on some external authority and absolutised, or alternatively, internalised, relativised and therefore open to modification and examination.

In the attempt to clarify, analyse and solve any given problem it is vital to press through to the level of presuppositional exposure below that which generates the spectrum of possible solutions. That is another way of saying that a problem presenting in one particular sub-

system can only be solved by increasing the level at which the analysis is undertaken to the point at which the causal dynamics generating sub-system behaviour are completely contained within the level of system analysed. Any lower level of analysis leaves the causal parameters outside the field of view and generates proposed 'solutions' which have no access to power for system change. At best such proposals lead to a reordering of the elements of the problem, more often than not no change occurs, and at worst the proposed interventions actually lead to severe system degrade and exacerbation of the presenting problem.

I sense that it is this kind of understanding which leads the author to write:

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'It is a pity that the theoretical presuppositions underlying the NIIO concept have not been explicitly stated by its proponents. If they had been, much of the argument that has characterised the debate might have been transferred from the level of conclusions to the level of presuppositions and resolved (if indeed they are capable of resolution) at that level'

His own position is then clarified in the words, 'It is important that we lay bare these theoretical premises because this paper, while accepting the m in general terms, also seeks to apply them to the analysis of the Churches' position.' That comment together with the sentence from page 1: 'Any analysis, particularly of social phenomena, presupposes a theoretical framework', leads me to question whether Neville may not himself be engaged in an exercise which is fundamentally located in position 1 (see above), namely that of ideological imposition, rather than that of position 2, namely empirical exposition. I think it is important to step one level further back and not only to lay bare the theoretical premises but also to enter into critical dialogue with them. Simply to lay them bare, to accept them and then to apply them to the analysis of the churches' position only leads to a set of hypotheses (in an attempt to explain the failure of the churches to respond to the problem) which carries with it the same level of faulting as that inherent in the proposals for the New International Information Order itself since both are founded on an unquestioning acceptance of the same set of underlying presuppositions.

The theoretical premises of the Baran, Sweezy, Frank, Schiller school provide a deeper level of analysis than that proposed by Walt Rostow, since they take into account the internal dynamics of the Western industrialised block as well as the two-way flow of capital and surplus value between North and South and the internal development of the peripheral economies. Rostow on the other hand limits analysis to the one-way flow of capital from North to South, together with the internal dynamics of the South only. The tragedy is that just as Schiller begins to apply the Baran premises to the information order, those premises are themselves being found to be inadequate for problem analysis of the political and economic order itself. We are caught up in a seep-through process of inadequate analysis which is perceived as avant-garde in the information field while already being demoded in the originating field. The churches, of course, are so far out in the seep-through process that what is avant-garde in the information field is virtually unheard of so far as the churches themselves are concerned. If possible it would be better to by-pass the linear seep-through process and ensure that the highest possible level of system analysis is applied at all points of the system. That, however, is unlikely, since the seep-through process itself mirrors the

whole pattern of information flow which in turn mirrors the economic and political realities and the underlying distribution of power.

Albert Bergesen's field survey in the opening chapter of 'Studies of the Modern World System' (Ed. Bergesen, published by Academic Press, 1980) outlines the shifts from lower to higher levels of social analysis. The first level saw the individual as the causal interactor, relations between persons generating the social system. This first level was categorised as 'Utilitarian', the next level is described as 'Sociological'. Here the social context, with political and economic factors, is seen to provide the matrix which generates interactions between persons, values, self-identity etc. Causal dynamics are externalised and moved up system. The third level Bergesen describes as the 'World System Paradigm' which is in a sense a replication of the first shift at higher order. The sociological view saw the social entities as generating the conditions for individual behaviour, but at a wider level saw the social entity itself or the nation state interacting with other such entities to generate world dynamics. The world system perspective, however, treats the world dynamic matrix as causal for the effective behaviour of the nation states, which in turn provides the social contexts which determine individual interaction. It is this world system paradigm with its emphasis on core and peripheral symbiosis, perceiving under-development not as a 'stalled stage of linear development, but... rather a structural position in the hierarchical world division of labour' which forms the theoretical framework within which Baran, Sweezy, Frank and Schiller undertook their analysis first of the world political and economic realities and then of its communication order. Rostow, and Brandt, would appear to be using the lower level theoretical framework of the sociological paradigm.

The world system paradigm itself however is still flawed and represents an inadequate level of analysis for the problems addressed within the NIIO debate, the Brandt Report, or the whole world development movement. Bergesen himself lives on the boundary between the world system paradigm and the next level which he describes as 'the globology paradigm'. He writes, 'the final paradigm revolution will come when we invert the parts-to-whole framework of the world system outlook and move to a distinctly whole-to-parts paradigm which posits a priori world social relations of production, which in turn determine the core-periphery relations of trade and exchange.'

This new level of analysis is likely to generate solutions to problems of social disparity, underdevelopment etc. which have greater power than those of the Baran, Sweezy, Frank school. Even so, I suspect that the globology paradigm is itself inadequate for system analysis and effective problem-solving. We must not, however, underestimate the difficulties encountered in the level shift of paradigm, thus Bergesen writes, 'The working of a distinctly world mode of production with its own class relations and class struggles is barely understood. The jump from the idea of society to the notion of the world as a corporate whole is a most difficult leap, but we seem to be inching toward a clear break with the past. We must invert the parts-to-whole logic of the idea of a world division of labour and substitute the whole-to-parts reasoning of a globological perspective in which independent world social relations, like world class relations, are seen as determining subsequent patterns of trade and exchange. Then and only then will the sociological paradigm truly end and the globology of the world mode of production begin.'

Bergesen clearly writes from within the world system perspective while inching toward the next level of systems analysis. I suggest however that three further levels beyond the globological are required for effective problem-solving.

One of Bergesen's difficulties is that he has no environment for his globology. The globological paradigm will I suggest only be entered as the meta-human ecological system is recognised as the context within which the human globology exists. Level shifts occur as a new environment is allowed within the system analysis. The globological paradigm therefore involves individual, social, world system, globological, ecosystem.

Beyond this paradigm I now posit three further levels. First, the shift from global to solar system. The behaviour, changes and determinants of the ecosystem depend upon the energy interactions with the sun and no study of the interrelationship between homo sapiens and his ecosystem environment can be causally complete without the foundation of the analysis being laid in the solar/terrestrial interactions.

The next level required is that of time base. The behaviour of the continua represented by the global human within ecological context have to be treated in a similar way to fluid dynamics and wave-field theory, requiring the addition of time as a fourth dimension to the standard techniques of 3-dimensional mechanics. Thus the surface of a stream cannot be predicted simply from a timeless study of the configuration of the bed, the water-flow etc. It is also a function of time, it varies with time and the present performance is affected by past characteristics. Behaviour of the world system is not only a function of the cross-section through the here-and-now of its sociological analysis it is also a function of its historical development.

Thirdly, in addition to the moves outwards into space and backwards into time, we also have to move into depth in terms of psychology. This next paradigm shift therefore takes into account the unconscious dynamics and psychological mechanisms of projection, originating deep in the unconscious areas of the individual and patterned out across the individual boundaries through every level of the system. This third paradigm shift restores the two-way causal pattern at every boundary. Thus the individual is seen to influence the social and the social the individual; conversely the social system influences the world system and the world system influences the social; and again the world system generates the global, while the global interacts with the world system, etc. All within the historical context and sustained within the energy flow-patterns of the solar system.

Expository analysis of the presenting data would appear to require a theoretical framework operating some four levels above that employed by Baran, Sweezy, Frank and Schiller. It is, however, the theoretical tools of this latter school which Neville Jayaweera takes as foundational for his own analysis of the New International Information Order and indeed of his critique of the churches' response. His analysis therefore, however brilliant within the field of application, suffers from the same limitations as the tools on which he is dependent.

With reference to the integration into the Western system he writes,

'Just as the economies of the vast majority of the countries outside the Communist-Socialist bloc are integrated into the Western Capitalist system in a relationship of dependence so are their communication and information systems as well. This is a logical corollary to the economic ascendancy that the Western countries gained over the rest of the world through the industrial revolution and the economic and political expansion through which that ascendancy was consolidated in the course of two centuries. If the steam engine, the blast furnace, the spinning jenny and the electric motor gave the West an unbeatable lead in generating and accumulating wealth, the telegraph, the telephone, the movie camera, the radio and TV and now the satellites and micro-electronics have given the West an equally unassailable lead in not only consolidating and adding to that wealth but also in strengthening its hegemony over the rest of the world..... the West gained this enormous global ascendancy through deploying its capital and technology...'

Baran level system analysis is unable to account for the inter-relationships between East and West. The globological perspective, however, perceives the Capitalist/Communist divide not as associated with two independent variables but as twin phenomena mirroring on each side of a fundamental split the core/periphery dynamic of the global process. The Capitalist system is dependent upon the Communist and the Communist is dependent upon the Capitalist through a process of self-definition in opposition to the perceived antithesis. The global economy is symbiotic with this East/West split and reflects not simply dependency upon the Western Capitalist position but dependency upon the conflicted Capitalist/Communist bifurcation.

The historical perspective which traces the dynamics back to the industrial revolution and its consequent economic and political expansion is inadequate. It represents a reading back of an ideological position rather than an exposition of historical process. The analysis makes sense from the perspective of a Third World observer unaware of the developments of European history and dynamic prior to its emergence as a political and economic oppressor, carried on the back of industrial and technological expertise. The roots of the dynamic originate further back. In fact the industrial revolution was itself triggered by the surplus value creamed off from indigenous populations by the inter-continental European trading companies. The ability of those companies to lay down the terms of such 'trade' lay in the superior military and naval power and the willingness to use superior and sophisticated force of arms in order to secure its booty at the expense of comparatively defenceless indigenous populations. The ideology which justified such a raping of other peoples is fundamentally at the racial/religious level. If the piratical looting of the buccaneers of the Elizabethan era and the immoral plundering of the trading companies had not been endorsed by both crown and church, they could not have been sustained. Those dynamics are not however simply historical but are also existential factors in the here and now of global dynamic. We do not have to look very far for examples of the use of ruthless power, validated by religious principle in the sustaining of oppression and exploitation of impotent minorities and indeed majorities in today's world.

Once the industrial revolution had taken off and the trading norms were established, secondary processes emerged which sustained the dynamics of exploitative oppression without the apparent use of military power or overt recourse to religious and ideological

justification. The emergence and mirroring of this oppressive dynamic within the world of communications simply represents another shift away from its causal origin of these underlying means of control Jayaweera is clearly correct in indicating that reordering of the information order is impossible without a reordering of the economic and political realities behind it. However, the same argument applies also to the world of economics and politics. We have to press deeper in order to gain access to power for system change.

The hegemony of the trans-nationals is only apparent. It is sustained only in so far as the underlying power-enforced transactional inequalities are sustained. Within that dynamic equilibrium the trans-nationals are free to operate as quasi-autonomous units but they do not in and of themselves possess the political or military might by which to establish or defend the trading inequalities out of which they generate their profit. With the historic power base undisturbed, information flow patterns emerge as a symptomatic mapping of the underlying dynamic. There is no way that the underlying dynamic itself is modified by a cosmetic attempt to meddle with patterns of information flow. Any New International Information Order grafted onto the old international economic dynamic would very soon be recaptured by the underlying factors, even if it was ever allowed to get off the ground! This is a position which Neville Jayaweera endorses,

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'The problem is not the one-way flow of information but the global economic relationships that render one-way flow inevitable. We will never understand what the NIIO is all about unless we look at problems of communication flow as a function of unequal economic relationships and uneven development.'

True, yet we have to press deeper and to say that we will not understand the realities of unequal economic relationships and uneven development until we can penetrate two or three levels back behind these presenting symptoms themselves.

The question of the direction of causality is raised acutely in the paragraph,

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'Unevenness, imbalance and injustice are characteristics not only of the international sector. They are equally so of the national scene. The North-South structure and centre-periphery relationships are very much replicated in individual local societies. So the campaign for an NIIO tends to appear as a diversion from the real issue which is the need to dismantle oppressive structures and exploitative relationships within individual societies. National imbalances are an integral part of global inequalities.'

Ever since the breakdown of the Utilitarian model and the emergence of the sociological perspective, it has been fashionable to attribute causality to the highest level of aggregation of the system analysed. Responsibility or causal dynamic in the sociological model is removed from the individual and vested in the social construct. From the world system perspective the individual social entities or nation states are seen as at the mercy of the international relationships. From the globological perspective these international relationships themselves are seen as impotently dependent upon the global dynamic. The logic of this sequence is ultimately to pass the buck to God, as by definition holding that

boundary beyond which the buck cannot be further passed. That kind of diagnosis leads to the religious shibboleths which resign all power and responsibility from all levels of the human society and affirm that catastrophe is inevitable unless God intervenes. The most appropriate strategy is an attempt to change God's activity and generate an appropriate divine intervention.

This is the point at which the psychological dimension must be added to the socio-political and economic. I would argue that it is the corporate expression of common unconscious projection from the depths of the individual psyche which generates the 'principalities and powers' which are always seen to operate at a level higher than the given system.

The oppressive structures, exploitative relationships and dysfunctional transactions which operate between persons, in societies, between nations, within the world system and on the boundaries of the global construct within its ecological environment represent different levels of aggregation of the interaction between the individual and his or her environment. These transactions we now realise are dominated by the projection of unconscious phantasy, splitting, denial, paranoia, dependency etc. which represent in external transaction a mirror of those defences employed internally to manage repressed primal angst. It is out of this dynamic matrix that the value systems, institutional structures, social use of power and hence the trading and communication patterns emerge.

Evidence that the social disparities and economic imbalance are generated not in fact by technology and industry but by the underlying balance of power is provided by the comment,

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'The only area in which the Third World has been able to overcome the power of the developed world is oil. This reversal was achieved not through negotiation but by the OPEC countries putting to use the enormous power of leverage that oil has over the industrial world. Where that power of leverage was not available, that is throughout the entire range of Third World commodities, except for a few minor concessions, the basic unequal and unjust relationships continue to prevail.'

Precisely. The economic and trading relationships are in fact contemporary expressions of the historic use of power, these initial interchanges set up the unjust and oppressive trading relationships, which are themselves maintained long after the causal power differentials have been eroded. Significant shifts are only achieved, however, when shifts in the power balance become overt, leading to some kind of re-negotiation of the dynamic matrix.

While that pattern of adjustment prevails, exploitation and oppression remain in the hands of the most powerful and are to be overthrown by revolution and armed or power-dominated intervention. The result is simply to spread or shift the effects of such dominance and oppression. The underlying dynamics which generate the unjust and oppressive use of power in a ruthless way must be analysed, entered and modified if escape from this increasingly destructive vicious circle is to be achieved.

Jayaweera is clearly accurate in commenting, that 'the majority of those engaged in the debate have approached the problematic at the level of manifestations rather than at the level

of roots'. His own analysis presses nearer to the roots than the current level of debate but is, I argue, still at the level of manifestations. He writes for instance,

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'... the struggle for the NIIO should be waged primarily at the level of economic and political relationships rather than at the level of communication, information and culture, which are largely the epiphenomena of economics.'

Unfortunately, any struggle which is waged primarily at the level of economic and political relationships is concerned fundamentally with manifestations of the system dynamic and is therefore unable to initiate significant system change. There are however indications of Neville Jayaweera's awareness of these underlying levels of analysis, thus,

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'Even beyond the economic issues that undergird it, the NIIO concept is fundamentally a concern for values. Though rarely articulated in such categories, the whole concept is predicated on the basis of a certain understanding of the nature of man and society. It assumes that human beings have certain rights, that these rights have to be identified and protected, and that the right to communicate and to be informed and educated is one among these rights. It posits that concentration of power in whatever form is inherently bad and that participation and sharing tend to enhance the quality of human beings, and protect their societies against oppression. It argues that profitability and the accumulation of wealth are not adequate criteria by which to order the affairs of societies and that there is "another development" deserving of striving towards. It accepts that individual cultures and societies however impoverished in economic terms have a dignity and a worth of their own and should therefore be protected from being swamped by more powerful cultures.....'

Unfortunately, far from being in a position to exercise an independent critique of world-value and therefore to provide a motivational ground for the implementation of the NIIO, the churches are actually caught up in and participate in the validation of the very value systems that under-gird the political, economic and information transactions of oppression and exploitation. This is quite clear from a study of the historic contribution of the churches, or indeed of religion per se in the validation of oppressive dynamics within society but is also becoming clear from an understanding of the psycho-dynamics of religion as reinforcing precisely those defences of splitting, projection, denial, displacement, paranoia and dependency which sustain the interactional matrix in its oppressive, exploitative mode at all levels of the world system.

It would therefore seem inevitable that while the churches may be looked to to give a 'moral lead' in the overt articulation of values, they also and at the same time collude covertly with the oppressive dynamics of the status quo. Any analysis lacking the psychological perspective can only record this as a somewhat bewildering paradox and seek to flagellate the churches for their apparent inconsistency.

Congruently with the theoretical presuppositions of the Baran, Schiller school, Jayaweera sees the churches (qua social institutions) as products of the economic and political realities.

We would now see them, however, as validators and preservers of the value systems and psycho-social dynamics which generate the political and economic realities. Neville Jayaweera makes some searching and brilliantly incisive comments about the churches' role.

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'The Churches, at least the Churches of the North, may not really want to overhaul the status quo. They are in a sense the product and the beneficiaries of the status quo. While they are willing to indulge in the contemporary progressive rhetoric, basically they may not contemplate subscribing to analyses or strategies that will threaten or dismantle the system to which they have been tied for the past four centuries. Up to the end of the middle ages the Church was firmly linked to the then status quo based on feudal economic relationships. The Protestant Reformation linked itself to the new economic relationships based on capital accumulation and free enterprise. In fact it provided the ideology for the new economic order of the entrepreneurial revolution.'

In that last sentence the empirical realities of the historic role of the churches begins to break through the imposed analysis stemming from the sociological and world system perspective of the Baran/Schiller school. The devastating problem here faced is that of attempting to mount a critique of the fundamental value system of the Churches from the institutional basis of an association dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of the communication of the values inherent in that system.

In conclusion, Jayaweera faces the despair of looking for a prophetic lead from institutions which are fundamentally in collusion with the system.

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'What the Churches can do as a minimum response is to maintain an informed, persistent and strident critique - primarily of the North but also of the South. But they are unable to do either. The former they will not do because basically they may not want a deep-going and fundamental change in the status quo. The latter they find inexpedient to undertake because it may expose where their fundamental allegiances lie!'

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8th December, 1980