CHAPTER-V

The WOMP and Third World:
The Ideas of Rajni Kothari and Ali A. Mazrui

In this chapter, we have dealt with the ideas of Rajni Kothari and Ali A. Mazrui, the two most important Third World scholars associated with the WOMP. The first section introduces, in general terms, Kothari’s Third World perspective and his emphasis therein on values of autonomy and self-reliance. The second section contains a more detailed account of his discussion of peace as a prime WOMP value. The third section examines his notion of economic development as an alternative to Western theories of modernisation. The fourth section takes up his discussion of issues related to socio-political justice and ecology. The next two sections deal with the views of Mazrui. The fifth section deals with his ideas on the importance of culture and traces context of his principal contribution in the form of World Federation of Cultures. The sixth section consists of a brief discussion of the values of peace, economic well being and sociopolitical justice in Mazrui’s writings. The final section relates the previously discussed ideas to the development of a world language and the role to be played by creative and egalitarian education.

I

One of the most prominent theorists of Indian politics, Professor Rajni Kothari was associated with the World Order Models Project for more than two decades. His writings on a just world order, written from what might broadly be called a Third World perspective, bring out the common concerns and aspirations of marginalised nations and peoples. He passionately argues their case for autonomy, development and self-reliance. He underlines the role of Third World in the democratisation of world order but equally underlines the need for greater democracy within the Third World itself. Kothari also displays great faith in grassroots initiatives. These must take over as and when states failed in transforming themselves.
Kothari was deeply concerned that the conventional view of world order was Western in both its origin and content. More specifically, it was "an offshoot of Western progressivism in the form of liberal internationalism." He believed that WOMP theorisation had been unable to free itself of this legacy. In their desire to move towards 'one world' and create 'One World Political Community', theorists like Richard Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz had emphasised the role of world level institutions. But, unless consciously checked, such institutions had every likelihood of turning out to be nothing but replication of western liberal values and institutions. Kothari thought that such 'universalism' was seriously suspect.

World order designs such as offered by Falk and Mendlovitz entailed uniformity and centralisation. Against these, Kothari was committed to a decentralised perspective on world order. He laid stress on the role of the "lower tiers of the global polity." As he pointed out, "the poor and the oppressed and the 'stateless' simultaneously need a global framework that is democratic and representative and a decentralised 'political' structure within and across nation-states."

Kothari was aware that the Third World states were weak and heterogeneous. Most of them were also tied in a neo-colonial relationship to the metropolitan centres in the North. As such, they did not have enough clout to make significant changes in the global distribution of power. Kothari nonetheless believed that diffusion of transformatory ideas, no matter how slow, would eventually bear result in "restructuring world politics to remove conditions that perpetuate inequality and dependence and devising institution - at various levels-- that will consolidate a world based on the principles of autonomy and equality."

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3 ibid.
5 Rajni Kothari, Footsteps into the Future : Diagnosis of the Present World and a Design for an Alternative, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974, p.12.
WOMP had tried to identify the basic values which had to be the source of these transformatory ideas. Kothari expanded on these values:

The basic objective of WOMP was the maximization of certain values, i.e., the values of peace, economic well-being, social and political justice, and ecological balance in order to realise a Just World. I added the value of democratic self-reliance.⁶

Autonomy must be gained and maintained at individual, national as well global planes, but autonomy of the nation-state was particularly important; for, it had to act "both as a means to checking and defeating the existing structures of dominance and exploitation in the world and as a necessary condition of the autonomy and self-reliance of the individual."⁷

To make autonomy, self-reliance and equality more sustainable, Kothari postulated major changes in the territorial structure of the world map. The preferred world would have 20 to 25 states, each large in size and strong enough to be self-reliant, that would maximize the goals of power and it would be distributed between nations equally and would also minimize the dominance of a few powers.⁸

Along with the values already mentioned, what must be developed is the larger ethic of behaviour, or what he called the ethic of self-control.⁹ Whereas in the poor countries, autonomy was frustrated by underdevelopment, exploitation and structural violence, Kothari observed that in the rich countries, autonomy was frustrated by over-development and waste of resources.¹⁰ He argued that "The economic system entailed in our preferred world must be changed from the present growth based model aimed

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⁶ Interview with Rajni Kothari by Sujit Lahiry on 1st and 2nd June, 2002 (Appendix-1).
⁷ Rajni Kothari, Footsteps into the Future: Diagnosis of the Present World and a Design for an Alternative, op cit., p.113.
⁸ ibid., pp.17-18.
⁹ ibid., p.11.
¹⁰ ibid., p.xx.
at an aggregate production target to a need based model defined by the principles of individual autonomy, social justice and non violence.'"\n
Kothari believed that the world had been witnessing major changes in recent history. Some of these were conducive to the creation of a preferred world order while others posed challenges. On the positive side were the new developments in science and technology, demystification of the laws of economic management, shift from an oligopoly of political and military power to a greater number of effective centres of power, and growing realization of the dangers released by the techno-economic model of industrialisation and urbanization.\n
On the negative side was proliferation of nuclear powers, which would further perpetuate the asymmetry between world regions. One of the greatest threats came, however, from what Kothari called "the long shadow of depoliticisation" and loss of faith in the role and capacity of nation-state as the basic political organisational unit. There was a need for "restoring the democratic and liberating role of the nation-state, returning to the issue of equity between and within nations, and re-emphasising the north-south dimension of world order."\n
At the same time, there was need also to "gently but decisively intervene in the affairs of the states that are found to defy norms of humane governance, decency and democracy often in the name of upholding national autonomy and security."\n
II

Kothari believed that negative definitions of peace, which equated it merely with absence or elimination of war, were conceptually flawed. In order to be substantive and sustainable, peace must be characterised by positive features such as humanism, order, harmony, equity and justice. These

11 ibid., pp.16-17.
12 ibid., p.2.
14 ibid.
15 ibid.
dimensions must therefore be incorporated into the very conceptualisation of peace itself. Negative definitions were also politically counterproductive, for they led policy makers to seek impractical and ill-guided solutions to the problems of conflicts and war. Wars could not be eliminated by steps which merely sought arms control or even complete disarmament.

Unlike some of the early theorists of WOMP, therefore, Kothari conceptualized peace as a process of transformation which was multidimensional in its nature. The task of building a peaceful world had to be addressed at several levels: military, ecological, economic, political, and socio-cultural.¹⁶ The traditional role of the state had to change, the ongoing conflicts over natural resources had to be contained and resolved, human rights had to be protected, survival of cultures had to be ensured, tendencies towards global militarisation had to be neutralised, and economic crises in various parts of the world had to be overcome.

One of Kothari's basic premises was that peace would be achieved only when all forms of dependence, characteristic of the existing world, came to an end and national political communities achieved autonomy and self-reliance. At the same time, these communities had to achieve internal consolidation, engage in democratic decentralisation, provide equity and justice to the people, ensure economic development, and gain political legitimacy.¹⁷

Kothari believed that peace had its own dialectic, and a peaceful world order could be achieved only through a sustained dialogue between thinkers, activists and policy makers. Kothari had great faith in the potential of grassroots movements which had emerged in the recent past. He listed among these the peace movement, environment movement, women's movement, movement for democracy and democratisation, movements

waged by the young and the caring against violence, human rights movement and the related struggles of tribes, minorities and ethnic groups.18

III

While discussing the WOMP value of economic well-being, Kothari was highly critical of the development theory which western theorists had offered in the 1950s and 1960s to the newly independent countries as the panacea for their problems of poverty and economic backwardness. The theory promised brisk economic progress accompanied by "movement from tradition to modernity, status to contract, and ascription to achievement".19 The premises and promises of this theory were embraced uncritically by policy makers in most of the Third World since economic development and social progress were indeed their prime concerns.

Kothari argued that this model of development had miserably failed in delivering the promised progress. Instead, it had led to massive dislocations, unprecedented human suffering, serious ethnic and racial tensions, insecurity at all levels, global arms race, increased gap between the rich and the poor, growing vulnerability of the states, growing pressures from the world power structure, etc.20

Arguing that economies of scale were crucial to a country’s economic development, the model had advocated heavy industrialisation achieved through massive induction of capital and technology. Since neither was domestically available to Third World states, both had to be borrowed from the industrialist West, resulting in dependency rather than development and exploitation rather than equity. The model also led to greater economic and social cleavages. There came to exist in these societies a major divide “between a small, highly paid, capital-intensive, ‘modern’ sector and a large,
A small entrepreneurial segment and urban middle classes reaped benefits at the cost of the poor, particularly the rural poor.

Even though Kothari’s critique of the development theory was based essentially on his analysis of Indian experience and his understanding of some other Asian countries, he shared a large common ground with the Latin American theorists of dependency and underdevelopment. These theorists provided a structural analysis of the relationship between metropolitan capital and peripheral economies and argued that development in the centre necessarily resulted in underdevelopment in the periphery. “Thus, development and underdevelopment could be described as two aspects of a single global process.”

But Kothari was not satisfied with merely providing a critique. He set out to re-conceptualise the entire development problematique and provided an alternative concept of development. The alternative had to be both analytical and political. As he put it, “the idea of alternatives, implying ‘alternatives to what is’ signifies a major dissatisfaction with … the existing paradigms of both science and politics.”

Kothari drew the broad outlines of development strategies to be adopted by the Third World countries. Removing unemployment must become their top priority. Establishment of heavy industries could not substantially help in this regard. Primary importance, therefore, had to be given to small scale industries and agricultural development. Once these were achieved, rural development should follow automatically. The gap in social and economic development between the city and the countryside would also be diminished. Kothari exhorted the Third World states to devote substantial means to spread mass literacy, particularly so among women and

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21 ibid., p.123.
23 Rajni Kothari, *Rethinking Development : In Search of Humane Alternatives*, op cit., p.5.
economically weak and socially handicapped strata. He also laid stress on health, drinking water, and public transportation for all.

While Kothari emphasised the obligation of development planners to provide the basic necessities of human life to all, he also argued that humans must learn to limit their material wants and aspirations. Kothari characterised this dual transformation as the policy of minima and the policy of maxima.24 Economic development which caters only to the material aspirations produces consumerism whereas real development should affirm the autonomy to seek out the path of self-reliance.25

Having noted that, Kothari was not against international integration per se; he was against forced integration. He supported integration of regions and cultures into one common whole provided it was based on agreed values and democratic participation.26 Kothari articulated a new international development strategy, which would give due regard to political and cultural factors as well as to alternative attitudes and values.27 The new international development strategy had to be one which helped all members of international community to "promote genuine sustainable equity enhancing, and people-oriented development and remove and arrest the maldevelopment of both Third World and industrialised countries."28

Kothari advocated collective assertiveness on the part of the Third World as well as consolidation through effective South-South negotiations.29

IV

Kothari believed that the issues of social and political justice were directly linked to the developmental model chosen by a Third World state. He

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24 ibid., pp.18-19.
25 ibid.
26 ibid., p.9 and pp.143-144.
27 ibid., pp.147-153.
28 ibid., p.154.
29 ibid., pp.158-160.
underlined the need to draw proper lessons from the past experiences of state and nation building. There were, he observed, two paths:

There is, on the one hand, the modernisation model which seeks to integrate the new states into a global power structure and a world market and in the process undermine their autonomy and power to shape their own destinies. There is, on the other hand, what may be called the State building model which seeks to conceive of the tasks of modernisation, economic development and the rest as part of a general drive towards consolidating national autonomy and realising the values of democracy, social justice and secularism.30

Whereas the Third World countries should have made the hard choices and adopt the state building model, unfortunately most of them had adopted the Western model of development. They had lost their independence and autonomy, and could not ensure political justice to their citizens.31 Caught in the vicious grip of poverty, backwardness and exploitation on the one hand and proxy wars and militarisation fuelled by super power rivalry on the other, Third World states have lacked resources as well as will and sense of responsibility to take up seriously the agenda of social and political justice for their poor populations. Globalisation has not improved their capacities but has nonetheless put them under greater pressure to conform to western standards of human rights and other issues of social and political justice. Civil society formations have sprung up to advocate the cause of justice for women, dalits, tribals, cultural minorities.32 Kothari accords greater importance to non-party political process and the non-governmental organisations for the promotion of social justice.

30 Rajni Kothari, State against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1988, p.117.
31 ibid., pp.111-117.
Kothari's views on the fourth WOMP value of ecology came in the form of his critique of Garrett Hardin's perspective on the subject. Kothari pointed out that there were two types of ecologists. The first was "the eco-development school of ecologists who are concerned with making development both environmentally viable and socially equitable." He further added, "There is another school of ecology which believes in conservation pure and simple with little or no regard either for the causes underlying today's runaway technology and its ravaging of the environment, or for the need for planning for the future which, while providing for the basic necessities of all, would ensure an ecologically sustainable strategy of growth."  

Hardin's basic problem was that while he upheld the 'sanctity of the carrying capacity' of the planet, he was against structural changes in the global distribution of resources and power in improving the standards of living of the poor. Hardin's critique of the current development theory did nothing to promote justice and equity. He called for controlling the number of the poor, because they would overtake and rob the richer parts of the world of their standards of living.  

Kothari agreed with Hardin that a new ecological theory is required. But this theory must endorse the idea of pooling of resources on a global scale. Only by using them in equitable ways would help in the preservation of ecological balance.

Kothari believed that the transition to the Preferred World would operate "at a number of levels, not catastrophic reversals of existing arrangements that may or may not produce the desired results". He argued that a federal structure that allowed greater autonomy and self-sufficiency at various levels of the system along with individual freedom of enterprise would form the key to a future world order model.

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34 ibid., p.108.
35 ibid., pp.108-110.
If Kothari provided WOMP an Indian or, more broadly, an Asian perspective, Ali A. Mazrui enriched the Project further by lending to it insights gained from his African experience of race and tribe relations. Mazrui analysed WOMP values from the cultural perspectives of different regions and states. He believed that the ultimate solution to problems of world order was “the promotion and consolidation of a shared culture” for the entire “human race”. For that, the dynamics of cultural change and social integration had to be understood in an interrelated manner. Mazrui’s approach was based on two major theories—“a theory of normative convergence, intimately related to cultural integration; and a theory of dependency”.

Since Mazrui emphasised the primacy of culture in all his writings, he sought solutions to all problems - domestic, international and global - in cultural modification. The root cause of most world order problems was that cultures often promoted dualist and dichotomous ways of looking at the world. They postulated sharp divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and assumed that a conflict necessarily existed between the ‘native’ and ‘alien’, the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’, the ‘East’ and the ‘West’, the ‘North’ and the ‘South’, and so on. This tendency of dichotomisation was as old as human civilizations. It will be a mistake therefore to attribute it to the cold war divisions between capitalist and the communist ideologies and states.

The existing world was divided among three cultural universes - Western, Islamic and Marxist. All of them betrayed a ‘monotheistic’ streak and

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38 Ibid., pp.3-12.
‘its derivative patterns of cognition’. Unfortunately, conventional world order thinking too had been coloured by this kind of dichotomisation. There could be a consensus on a specific set of world reforms only when people across cultures shared a framework of social reasoning. Positive change therefore required substantial measure of global cultural integration, built on consensus around new values. Creation of a preferred world order thus depended not merely on the principal values which WOMP itself postulated; it also needed consensus on several other supporting values. Mazrui wrote “we see world reform as a problem of mobilizing consensus, we see consensus as a problem of building up supporting values and we see this latter as an outgrowth of cultural convergence.”

Cultural convergence demanded global dissemination of new ideas but it did not necessarily require the establishment of new formal institutions. In many ways, the convergence was already beginning to occur. To quote Mazrui:

The spread of literacy, the role of technology in affecting life-styles, the acceleration and facilitation of international travel, the international distribution of books and newspapers, the emergence of television programmes and films distributed on a world scale, the impact of the radio and the consolidation of external broadcasting services to other parts of the world as an aspect of foreign policy have all combined to introduce the beginnings of shared values, shared tastes and shared images.

Global cultural convergence was in the form of pop culture (shared tastes in music, films, sports, and magazines) as well as in shared political

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41 ibid., pp.41-43.
43 ibid., p.5
emotions and sensibilities.\textsuperscript{44}

Mazrui suggested 'cultural ecumenicalism' in the form of a World Federation of Cultures. The Federation would not only work in coordination with the constituent cultures but also borrow from regional and linguistic cultures. This would help correct imbalances produced by uneven creativity and dissemination in the Federation.\textsuperscript{45} Mazrui summed up his position by suggesting that world order should be seen "in terms of a federation of human cultural contributions, combining a global pool of shared achievement with local pools of distinctive innovation and tradition."\textsuperscript{46}

VI

To Mazrui, peace entailed diminishing violence within, between and across states. But violence must not be understood in an undifferentiated and abstract manner. Historically, violence had played both transformative and integrative roles. It had been used for making revolutions as well as for nation-building.\textsuperscript{47} The positive or negative role of violence depended on the form it took, while in turn the form often depended on the underlying causes.

The goal of peace therefore could not be achieved by merely devising legal-institutional mechanisms. A necessary prerequisite for addressing the issue of violence was understanding its real nature. He distinguished between three categories of violence: deviant violence, social violence and international violence. He also distinguished between civic violence and political violence. Collective violence was the most explicitly political form of social eruptions. Various factors related to kinship, economy, ideology and political culture exerted influence in the eruption of violence.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} ibid., pp.36-37.
\textsuperscript{46} ibid., p.37.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid., pp.231-243.
Most important for our present purpose, Mazrui believed that the problem of world peace is in the initial stages, a problem of domestic cultures and of relations between social groups in individual countries and of values governing those groups. It could be said that all international wars, have been, so far, externalized civil deficiencies, both cultural and social. To solve the problem of international conflict therefore necessitates an attempt to tackle the causes of domestic tensions and domestic pathologies.\textsuperscript{49}

He concluded that the minimization of violence in world affairs had two necessary preconditions: the processes of state formation and nation building.\textsuperscript{50}

Another foundational requirement for creating the preferred world order was economic restructuring. Economic relations had to be restructured in a manner that left no need for violent revolutions. The need was to ensure the economic well being of poor strata within weak states. The process of modernisation, especially the modernisation of economic culture, would be a key process in the transformation of the world.

Modernization involved “first, the modernization of economic techniques and processes; second, the modernization of economic motivation; and third, the modernization of social stratification both domestically and internationally”.\textsuperscript{51} The formation of an effective local entrepreneurial class in every developing country was of crucial importance. Equally important was to maximize mobility among domestic classes. Thirdly, “the capability of one nation to empathize economically with another needed to be nourished to greater efficacy”.\textsuperscript{52} Mazrui’s ultimate dream was a global

\textsuperscript{49} ibid., p.245.  
\textsuperscript{50} ibid., p.243.  
\textsuperscript{51} ibid., p.271.  
\textsuperscript{52} ibid., p.303.
village based on egalitarian interdependence. Mazrui observed, "A mature interdependence would entail a better relationship, based in part on effective mutual vulnerability, between the technologically superior northern hemisphere and the sources of primary products to the south".\textsuperscript{53} He also observed that

The two processes of rising expectations in the southern hemisphere and diminishing complacency in the northern, promoted in part by the impact of global communications, should result in a more balanced villagization of human perspectives.\textsuperscript{54}

At the same time, Mazrui pointed out that a new kind of global apartheid had emerged after the end of the Cold War. The two world wars had been fought basically by the white races themselves. Initially, the Cold war too was an extension of the intra-Whites rivalries, but it gradually engulfed the whole world. With the end of Cold war, the confrontations within the white world had largely come to an end (even though conflicts at the micro level continued as between the Serbs and the Croats, the Irish and the English, the Ukrainians and the Russians). What is more important to note about the end of Cold War, however, is the fact that the U.S. as the only hegemonic power had succeeded in imposing market ideology all over the world in a historically unprecedented way. This had led to increased marginalisation of Africa. It had also put under question nation-state as a political entity. Since the state could no longer play the integrative role, the world was getting divided on the basis of race and skin colour.\textsuperscript{55}

As he puts it:

the triumph of those market ideologies is polarizing the globe along racial lines more deeply than ever, with

\textsuperscript{53} ibid., p.328.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid., pp.303-304.
black people almost everywhere at the bottom, white people in control of global wealth, and Asian people in intermediate levels of stratification.56

Noting the distinction between structural and overt forms of racism, he added, “while structural racism is dividing the world between rich white guardians and poor black wards, overt racism in the Northern Hemisphere is having almost equally devastating consequences.”57

Mazrui prophesised that Third World would now imbibe Japan and China as their relevant pair of role models than either the U.S. or the former USSR.58

VII

Making a conceptual distinction between three kinds as well stages of interdependence, Mazrui argued that the history of nineteenth and twentieth centuries had seen a transition from ‘primitive interdependence’ to ‘feudo-imperial’ interdependence. The latter was deeper and more pervasive than the former, but it was also more onesided and exploitative. The need was to move to the third, ‘mature’, kind of interdependence, which would be based on mutual vulnerability of the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Mazrui suggested that mature interdependence would require that one sided penetration of the feudo-imperial era was balanced out by Third World counterpenetration of the First World.59

As for the Cultural Federalism, Mazrui visualised changes at three levels. First, greater mobility, both physical and intellectual, would lead to greater cultural linkages and harmonisation. Second, Mazrui emphasised “the importance of language as a medium of cultural convergence and as a major factor in intellectual mobility itself.”60 Movement had to occur from reliance on

56 ibid., p.186.
57 ibid.
59 ibid., pp.307-308 and pp.325-328.
60 ibid., p.334.
communal, national and regional languages towards a global language. English language could play that role after it had been suitably ridden of its colonial and Anglo-American biases. While Mazrui advocated "A Global Language Policy for a Global Cultural Heritage", he also emphasized the need to reduce the dominance of Western culture in the global pool of human civilization.

Finally, what was needed was a more egalitarian and creative educational policy which would help broaden intellectual horizons and create a new international morality, making rich and strong recognise their obligations towards the poor and the weak, and thus lay down the basis of a "pax-humana and a man-centred system of values".  

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61 ibid., p.353.
62 ibid.
63 ibid., p.435.