

Be brave enough in creating a new normal



LETTERS

Wednesday, 09 Jun 2021

SINCE World War II, thanks to realism as the dominant school of thought in international and strategic studies, prominent strategists have been prioritising the so-called “high” politics over “low” politics. These scholars, whose works influence heads of governments in the bipolar international system, have been directly or indirectly shaping global as well as domestic politics for decades.

According to James J. Wirtz, a renown scholar in strategic studies, high politics are matters pertaining national security that have been considered as “vital”. Examples are nuclear deterrence, arms control, and alliance politics. Through the lenses of utilitarian thinking, these “traditional” threats are considered as matters of the utmost concern by military and political strategists.

Other matters such as potential pandemic viruses, environmental problems and management of scarce resources have been subsumed into low politics simply because these issues are perceived as not being an immediate or substantial threat to national security.

However, with the global spread of Covid-19, low politics has taken the limelight as governments struggle to minimise the impact of the pandemic on national security. This pandemic had actually been predicted by scholars as a potentially serious threat to human beings. It was also predicted that we will not have the exact medicine to heal it.

However, the warning failed to attract serious attention from strategists and people in power. Even Wirtz had mistakenly predicted that the pandemic would occur in developing nations first.

Low politics has also been defined as non-traditional issues in strategic studies. Here, the word “traditional” itself actually needs to be redefined. We know that ancient civilisations had also faced such life-threatening pandemics. We need to open our eyes and learn from history that there is

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We should therefore not belittle utopian ideas, as we have seen how something as existentially unexpected as the Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly changed our world. For instance, we may want to think about other alternatives to the current profit-oriented globalised capitalist system, and this could even include the barter trade system even though it may sound ridiculous.

The point is leaders and strategists must be brave enough to opt for a utopian endeavour in order to create a truly “new normal”. A good starting point is by looking up to low politics and not merely to high politics anymore.

DR ZAHID ZAMRI ,Assistant professor, Department of Political Science, International Islamic University Malaysia

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Political System; Covid-19 Pandemic

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