

EE466 Political Economy of Development: Quiz 1

Question 1

A.) In the film, we can clearly see that the conflict originated from two different opposite paradigms: The Positivism and The Critical Paradigm. On one side, to believe in something, there must be proof. On the other side, faith is enough. This leads to the conflict that may block an opportunity in development, or maybe the cause of war. Hypatia has the strong positivism paradigm, she will not believe in anything if there's no proof, including Christianity. We can see that Hypatia herself has no problem with others, because she is just trying to find the answer for her astronomy question. However, the majority of the population in Alexandria are Christian and they strongly opposed Hypatia's hypothesis due to the religious belief. Moreover, according to the Christianity teaching, women mustn't be teaching in school. Without any questioning, Christians banned from the school. On the Hypatia side, she also insists on not believing in Christianity, even it costs her life. From my perspective, the films show enough evidence on how paradigm conflict impacts society. First, as I mentioned earlier it creates conflict that may lead to war. Let's imagine on a bigger scale. What if the positivism is not just Hypatia, but there's more of them. Second, society misses an opportunity in development. Instead of gaining technological development, one philosopher has been killed and accused her as a witch. Not mentioning the possibility that the conflict will lead to war and slow down development or even worsen off by destroying libraries and scrolls. In conclusion, different paradigms, on a small scale, will make the society miss the opportunity to develop, but on a larger scale may lead to turmoil and war.

B.) Aside from religious conflict, we can see that *Agora* has shown us that, in that period of time, the majority of people believe in religion rather than science with proof. With the positivism paradigm, we can explain the phenomena for many reasons. From my perspective, there's no doubt why people in the classical era tend to believe in religion, which there's no single proof, and condemn science that's offered the proof which opposed the religion. In that

time, surely there's no research paper or educational media like we do today. Even though they have a library that contains a lot of knowledge, the majority of people still choose to be on the religious side. Needless to say, even in 2020, there are many people who choose to believe in something that can't be proved and refuse to accept the opposition, even though there's proof available. This is the evidence that why religion is so popular in that time. With lower education, religion can dominate people's minds better than scientific reason does, because most religions deal with people's everyday life and the heliocentric model doesn't. As we can see in the film, Christianity comes in the form of saving and helping. The christian missionary gives bread to poor people and refers to God, persuading them to believe and be loyal to the savior. Therefore, we can use this evidence to support the reason why there's holy conflict in Alexandria. At one point, when the religion needs to be spread and since there are pre-dominated religions, religion exists in another group of people, some may convert, and, surely, some may resist. Consequently, conflict is inevitable. In the end, with the positivism paradigm, we can analyse the phenomena of the movie using the proof we see in the film or other sources to support our belief.

Question 2

A.) When talking about the most developed country, surely, the one that comes to most people's minds is the United States of America. With highly developed technology that could win the space race and many popular cultures that went across the world, we can't deny that the USA is one of the most developed countries in the world. However, in deciding who's the best in development, one criterion may not be enough. The following paragraph will be discussing the reason behind the idea.

According to a documentary film by Michael Moore, *Where To Invade Next*, we can see that there are many countries that are more developed than the USA in many areas. Therefore, one criterion is not enough. For example, in Italy, they're having, at least, eight paid vacations per year, not including pregnancy or marrying, which is completely different from the USA. If we take a look at this perspective, we can see that Italy is more developed than the USA in social welfare. Moreover, the documentary film with the same director, Michael Moore's *Sicko*, instead of pointing to the more developed countries, shows us that in the land of freedom itself isn't the

most developed in the criterion of freedom. In this case, not the freedom in the rights or regime, but freedom in accessing healthcare. The film talks about the healthcare system in the USA and how healthcare insurance companies exploit American people. This example supports the reason that the USA is not the most developed country in some criteria. According to Adam Szirmai, development can be classified into seven types, economic growth, structural change, poverty reduction, social welfare, modernization, freedom, and sustainability. From my perspective, these classifications are just some that people mainly perceived 'development' as. It can be interpreted and perceived in a different way depending on societies.

In other words, the definition of 'development' in each society can be different because they are constructed differently in region, culture, history, and many more. For that reason, there's no doubt why each country perceives and pursues the goal of development in a different way. Some may try to be rich, some may try to change, or some may try to sustain. Therefore, in my opinion, 'development' is to fix, to improve, to prevent, and to upgrade, depending on the status, situation, and goal of a society.

B.) Geography, culture, and ignorance hypothesis are all important determinants of development level in each society, but the best one, from my perspective, is 'Institutions'. Even a society has a great geographical advantage but without the right institutional dynamics, society will likely fail to capture those opportunities and critical juncture. The following paragraph will be discussing the reasons why 'institutions' is the best hypothesis in determining the development level.

Having a culture that supports innovation and development is highly beneficial, having a nice spot of geography in setting the city is fortunate and wise in planning, but without the right institutional dynamics, a society surely fails to grab all of the opportunities they are supposed to have. According to the class lesson example, concerning only the stability of his power, Chinese emperors banned overseas commercial activity. Instead of grabbing an opportunity in contributing to economic development, the Chinese leader chose to, according to the lecture slides, "cutting itself off". In other words, China failed to capture a critical juncture from overseas trade by concerning only on power. I've watched and studied *The Romance of the Three*

Kingdoms, and I can see that China has a strong culture, knowledge, technological advancement, and many domestic conflicts throughout history. From my point of view, nearly all of the conflict originated from the powerful central power, the Emperor and Dynasty. Due to the unlimited authority of the 'Hongde', it drives people to struggle for power. Consequently, turmoil all over the country is inevitable. If China can reduce domestic conflicts, it will surely develop a society with its full potential.

C.) From my point of view, I believe that development is conceivable without economic growth, but not as effective as the one with good economic growth. According to Adam Szirmai's Socio-Economic Development on Amartya Sen's perspective, "It (the economic growth) is important in its potential contribution to a wide range of freedom", I totally agree with his words. Sen also believes that it is important, but not as a goal. Being a rich country is similar to having a VIP ticket for development. There's more potential for development than the poor countries to fulfill social needs. However, being rich doesn't mean that you're already better than others in the sense of development. There are also some important factors that need to be considered. As we can see in 'Where To Invade Next', some countries may not have high economic growth as the USA, but they're ahead in something. For example, Finland has the best educational system in the world, even at first, their quality is nearly the same as the United States. However, at one point, Finland's education quality is increasing dramatically and their students are number one in the world. While the USA remains around the same level at twenty-nine. Not to mention Slovenia with the free university and Italy with the amazing amount of paid vacation, we can conclude that economic growth is important in development, but it doesn't mean that your country doesn't have poor people, great social welfare, freedom in accessing health care and education, and many more.

Question 3

The entering of Fuyao in Ohio consists of advantages and disadvantages depending on who the actor is. It stimulates our thoughts on the contradiction within our society. I have no wonder why 'American Factory' won the Academy Award for the best documentary feature.

Aside from the cinematography, music composition, and film direction, there is something special about it. I've watched the film twice with two different perspectives: Capitalist and Marxist. Surprisingly, by only changing the views, it was a completely different experience each time I watched them. This is an excellent portrayal of the endless debate between Adam Smith and Karl Marx. The following paragraph will be discussing each concept specifically with examples from the movie.

From my perspective, 'Division of Labors' is the main factor in changing how I view this movie. There are many examples of advantages and disadvantages in the film. It may be the main factor in contributing to factory productivity. However, from another point of view, it may be the way for a capitalist to exploit workers and squeeze the surplus from them as much as they can, which, in the end, leads to 'Alienation'. The most obvious example would be Bobby, Furnace Off-Loader at the company. He has to work at Fuyao because he has to, due to the social constraint. According to the film, at one point, he began to ask himself over and over again why he's doing this? In my opinion, this is clear evidence of the existence of alienation. People are not happy with what they're doing, but still have to do it in order to survive. Moreover, concerning mainly on productivity, there are some interesting sayings in the film which can clearly show the Fuyao agenda: "We try to give them the environment they want as long as it's within the reasonable budget". The Glass company also set the wage even lower than GM, the former company. According to one of the workers, Shawnea, the Fuyao Glass Inspector, she can't even afford to buy gym shoes for her kids due to the sustenance wage. Concerning only on cost and treating workers like they're just the means of production, this can be the strong evidence to support the concept of exploitation and abstract labor. Compared to Chinese, the answer to why the company in China is more efficient. From my experience, after I see how China supervisors manage and control their workers, it makes me think of the time when I studied territorial defense study when I was in high school. They have to be in the line and report the number just like in the army. That's the clear answer why the Chinese are more productive than America and it is also the clear evidence of abstract labor in China. Aside from scoping only on Fuyao, American Factory also shows us the evidence on the capitalism impact of the proletariat class. Jill, Fuyao Forklift Operator, has lost her house and the position to stay in the

middle class after the GM factory has shut down. She has to live in her sister's basement and also use her bed. The only thing she owns is labor power. In the interview, she said that she has to struggle back to the middle class again. Needless to say, we can see the obvious evidence of class struggle and alienation in her life all at once. Another example is that the company wouldn't want to risk hiring old workers like Rob, surely because they're not efficient enough. It's the obvious portrayal of the commodification concept by perceiving each worker as a means of production only. On the other hand, in the perspective of Fuyao, things are completely different. In Adam Smith's views, the Division of Labors is beneficial. It increases productivity through specialization. In the case of the USA's Fuyao, there are obstacles that block the full potential of efficiencies that the company can reach, such as the union and socio-cultural factors. We can see that if we watch this documentary with Adam Smith's perspective, it will be more economically. As we can see in the movie, Cao, the chairman, insisted that he doesn't want to have a union in the company, because it will hurt and make the company bleed. The reason is that unions will strengthen workers' force and reduce the power of capitalists, which, in the end, will reduce productivity and efficiency, due to the negotiation to increase wages and prevent capitalists from squeezing surplus from labors. Consequently, the Chairman said that he will shut down the factory if the union comes in. We can see that it's a never ending debate because each side is all fighting for their benefits, but surely the proletariat is disadvantageous to the bourgeoisie and capitalists because they have no choice. If the union comes in, capitalists can choose to shut down, but labor can't choose because they need to survive the social constraint.

The union is one of the characters in American Factory that can change from protagonist to antagonist if audiences switch their views. Fuyao can't control American workers because they will threaten to get help from the union. Consequently, it makes me wonder, why do they want to get help from the union? The company is exploiting them? Or do they want to counter exploit the company? Similar to the previous concept, it's all about benefits. The company is trying to avoid having a union because they want to maintain their efficiency level. However, if they're exploiting laborers (too much), surely they have to fight for their rights and strengthen their voices through the union. In this case, workers in Fuyap believe that the company is exploiting them. For instance, one worker has a speech in the union that he's got only 27,000

USD per year from Fuyao. However, his daughter, who works at a nail salon, received 40,000 USD per year, which is a lot higher. Another example is that one worker from Fuyao has been fired because he/she has been in the hospital for one week without calling off. These reasons, and maybe more, make workers feel that they're unsafe, which is one form of exploitation from the company. Moreover, from the union situation, Fuyao has terminated two American presidents and replaced them with the Chinese president, because the company believes that those American presidents aren't helping the company in preventing the union. Consequently, workers feel uncomfortable, because the authority and supervisors are mostly Chinese, they have no one to talk to. If there is a union, surely worker voices will be strengthened and some of the current problems will be reduced. On the other hand, as I mentioned earlier, from the perspective of the company, the efficiency will surely go down, and at some point, the capitalist will think that it's not worth investing there anymore, then shutting down is the decision the company would probably make.

With the goal of efficiency and productivity, technological development is one of the paths that will supply the company with a sustainable outcome. In the last part of the film, it shows us how technological development affects the company and workers. Some people have been replaced with the machinery because it's more productive than the company and it's the long term investment. However, for that worker, he/she has lost her job and wealth stability to struggling with social constraints. Rob, Fuyao Furnace Supervisor, has been fired because he can't use the computer quickly enough. The only thing the proletariat class can do is to adapt to the environment and labor market demand, because technological development is inevitable. From the capitalist point of view, technological development and labor replacement are inevitable too. Even if they want to keep those workers working, how can they compete with others? Consequently, it may lead to the concept of 'Creative Destruction', where the company that can't fight against others have to get out of the competition and, in the end, turn into the working class. We can see that it's the conflict that, from my perspective, everyone is fighting for their survival. Firm has to compete with other companies and workers have to try their best to survive and also crawl into a higher class.

Question 4

After reading Baker and Phongpaichit's *A History of Thailand* and watching Penek Rattanueng's *Paradoxocracy*, they both gave me the experience and knowledge on Thailand history in the different aspect rather than the same story that has been told over and over again since I was in primary school. Also, it reminded me of my favorite Chinese historical novel, "*The Romance of Three Kingdoms*", opening line "The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been". Starting from the coup launched by the People's Party in 1932, the Land of Smiles went through a lot of conflict that some of them propel the country ahead, but some of them just left the scar that Thai people will never forget. The following paragraph will be analysing on Thai history in the aspect of Marxist historical development.

It all started in 1932, where countries around the world gradually changed from monarchy to the new form of government. With the hope to see Siam transforming into a better developed country as an antithesis, the People's Party performed the coup against the absolute monarchy of King Prajadhipok, which is the thesis in that time, and turned the country into a constitutional monarchy. Within one year, in 1933, royalists stood up and resisted against the People's Party hoping to reclaim the absolute monarchy for their king. Consequently, Phibun, as a thesis, can manage to eliminate the Baworadet rebellion, as an antithesis, and follow the abdication of King Prajadhipok. Five years later, Phibun is now the prime minister and World War II has just begun. Thailand joined the axis powers with the leading of Phibun. However, Pridi, the former friend who's performed the bloodless coup together and the regent of the king, doesn't agree in joining the axis power and collaborating with Japan. Moreover, Phibun tries to take control in everything including the absolute power. These are conflicts that arise from the thesis from Phibun. Therefore, the resistance group created 'Seri Thai' as an antithesis against Japan and Phibun's thesis. In 1944, Phibun was removed from the prime minister. At the same time, Pridi is trying to create absolute democracy, but it doesn't go well due to the disagreement in the population. For nearly ten years without coup, due to the mysterious case of King Rama 8 and the conflict in the country, Sarit performed the military coup and eliminated all Pridi's remnant from Thailand. As a synthesis, The Land of Smile has been governed by the military

dictatorship for twenty six years under the regime of Sarit and Thanom. In 1973, at the point they can't bear the thesis anymore, student activists, as the antithesis, protested against the dictator in October, in which we all know as 14th of October. From the time of tolerance, people no longer need to bear the regime of dictatorship anymore, because, due to the incident that has occurred, it's the fall of military government and the synthesis comes in the form of the election. Time passes by the military government. Time passes by, here comes another important event to be analysed. In 1991, by taking the position he once said he'll never do, people, once again, revolted against the unacceptable Suchinda position of prime minister. The conflict between thesis and antithesis occur in the name of 'Black May'. Consequently, Thai people receive the new prime minister as their synthesis. Next, the last event I'm going to analyse, 2006 coup. In the time of democracy, as I mentioned earlier, it is similar to the phrase of that Chinese historical novel "Long united must divide". During the time of Thaksin, even the economy is going well, there's still a group of people disagreeing with his position as a prime minister, People's Alliance for Democracy. Due to the conflict, coup d'état is inevitable. And once again, the military government.

In conclusion, we can see that when combining all the events that have occurred during modern Thai history and try to see them in the bigger picture, from my perspective, it's like a cycle. The cycle that swirls along with the period of time. Sometimes, a thesis from one event can be an antithesis in another event. It's up to who's in power during that time. Things just revolve around the concept that I mentioned earlier. When we unite, at one point, we will divide. After we've been divided for long enough, then it's time to go to the democracy monument as an antithesis fight for change. I hope we reach the end of the cycle soon.

