INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, anger has become a powerful feature of Asian politics, from Russia and Turkey to the Philippines, India, and the Islamic world. Often this is portrayed as a backlash against globalization, a step back from modernization. Actually, however, anger is an integral part of the process of modernization.

OBSERVATIONS

‒ In the years leading up to the Arab Spring of 2011, countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya were hailed as star reformers. Egypt for instance, was the number one reformer in 2008 in the World bank’s Doing Business indicator and remained in the top 10 the following two years.

‒ After 2000, Russia and Turkey experienced rapid economic growth, new middle classes emerged, and people believed there would be more convergence of values with western countries. Over the last few years, however, their regimes have become more closed and authoritarian. Moreover, even the middle classes and the younger people appear to become quite conservative.

‒ For decades, India and the Philippines have had a reputation of being peaceful, pluralistic, and open societies. But under Modi and Duterte, both countries have become more populist, authoritarian, and nationalist.

ANALYSIS

We tend to view the process of modernization as one of linear progress. In this view, countries like China and India, that are opening up their economies, want to move forward, but North Korea somehow rejects prosperity and freedom. Similarly, many debates about the Islamic world focus on how this religion inhibits modernization because it rejects Enlightenment values. Furthermore, there is a general belief that as countries modernize and get wealthier, they also get more progressive and democratic. These views of modernization, however, are incorrect or at least partial.

In *Age of Anger*, Pankaj Mishra shows how modernization has always had a darker side. Among the observers of modernization, he contrasts Voltaire with Rousseau. Voltaire represented the confident self-made men who thrive when traditional barriers disappear. He represents the aspiring middle classes that gain prosperity in modern society. Rousseau, on the other hand, gave voice to the greater part of the population that got lost in this changing world. For them, modernization means being uprooted from traditional communities and living in poverty and uncertainty in large cities. Their life is in constant upheaval and they are unable to improve their lot, which generates anger.

In *Embedding Technopolis*, we have described this dynamic as one of “bastardization”. Literally, a bastard is an illegitimate child, someone who is disowned from his heritage. Modernization fundamentally changes people’s living condition: Economic change disrupts work, urbanization changes living conditions, and social changes break down traditional patterns of authority. Modernization this way “bastardizes” people by breaking the bonds with tradition. This loss of orientation is traumatic and creates anxiety, stress, and anger, which leads to radical movements that create new homes for the illegitimate children. From this perspective, the rise of socialism, communism, and nationalism in western history, are not aberrations from the line of progress, but part and parcel of modernization, the Rousseauian response to Voltairean self-confidence.

This perspective also helps us to look differently at current developments. Problems in the Middle East are not caused by an ancient religion, but by the disruptive forces of modernization that are transforming the lives of people. Furthermore, it means that countries that are successful economically, are not immune to backlash. Economic growth creates wealth, but it also speeds up change in daily life, causing people to look for new sources of orientation. The wave of nationalism that has spread from Russia and Turkey to the Philippines and India, belongs to the process of modernization. The rise of Asia will thus not only bring wealth, individualism, and freedom but also a longing for unity, authority, and community.

POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES

‒ Smart Habitat technologies that facilitate community and homeliness in urban environments.

‒ Countries that are well-equipped to address anger, like India and Indonesia.