

ASKING BETTER POLICY QUESTIONS

Globalism, Context, Data, Comparativism, Media

Key Facets of Modern Policy Thinking

OSAMA SIDDIQUE

RoLD 2022: Beyond Leadership

TIJ-IGLP International Workshop Program

BANGKOK, THAILAND



THE IGLP WAY - I

❑ Assumptions, Preoccupations, Approaches

- We are not the 'Usual Suspects' – Who are They?
- The rigor & diversity of an international academy
- 'Critical' Scholars with Heterodox Approaches
- Doctrine, Dogma and healthy Skepticism

THE IGLP WAY - II

❑ Assumptions, Preoccupations, Approaches

- Law's indeterminacy & open-textured nature – ambiguities, uncertainties, opportunities
- Laws in Books vs. Laws in Practice
- Law: As a Policy Instrument; Law as the Language of Policy Making
- **The Dark Side** – Law's Coercive Potential

THE IGLP WAY - III

□ Assumptions, Preoccupations, Approaches

- Legal & Political regimes:
Conformism/Collaboration/Coercion/Dissent/Confrontation
- Mere Rule changes not Panacea
- **Reform Failure**: Not just poor Implementation or Lack of Intent
- Ethics of Policy-making

THE IGLP WAY - IV

- ❑ **Assumptions, Preoccupations, Approaches**
 - Situating in **Time**; Situating in **Space (360° Audit)**
 - Better **Frames**, Better **Questions**, Better **Solutions**
 - **A Multi-lensed, Multi-level** Analytical approach (diverse disciplines & vantage points)
 - **Deconstruction: Reconstruction**
 - **Our Frameworks** ❑ **Your Projects**

DEMYSTIFYING 'POLICY'



DEMYSTIFICATION - I

- ❑ **How do we even recognize the domain called Policy?**
 - How does it differ from politics?
 - Is policy-making neutral - above all the tumult and the fray?
 - How does policy interact with law?
 - How does one define its boundaries? Should one?

- ❑ **How do we even recognize the domain called Policy?**
 - Is it rational, quantifiable, scientific? Can & should it be?
 - Are policy discourses normatively indeterminate?

□ The Process of Policy-Making

- Does it matter who frames policy questions – who has a say and who doesn't?
- And are there 'good' and 'bad' policy questions?
- How does one strike a balance between larger norms and local concerns?

□ The Process of Policy-Making

- Should abstract Universal Goals even determine Policy at the cost of non-neutral Local Factors?
- Or should policy-making be sanitized to avoid myriad surrounding non-neutral contestations – the messy real life?

□ Policy Choices

- Is policy-making about the Ideal, the Desirable, the Pragmatic, or merely the Doable?
- Prior Biases & Pet Suppositions
- Is it really difficult to state what is correct policy?
- Policy, law's instrumentality and the power of bureaucracy

□ Policy Choices

- The challenges of competing normative frameworks in the same policy milieu?

- Understanding or Analyzing Policy Initiatives?
 - Diagnosis: Is the problem really a problem?
 - Are our ideas/info about it adequate?
 - Our myopias & biases?
 - Can we frame it differently?
 - What does the past tell us? Do we appreciate the context?
 - Understanding the Idea or Initiative; Mapping the Terrain; Putting the Idea into Motion

THE ENIGMA OF 'EXPERTISE'



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□ Policy-Making & the Hegemony of Expertise

- What is the role of **Knowledge**?
- Where does it come from? Why do we trust it?
- Who is served by '**Expertise**' & who isn't?
- Which voices are elevated and which subdued?

□ Policy-Making & the Hegemony of Expertise

- Identifying stakeholders, constituents, allies, opponents, affectees– Multiplicity of Perspectives
- The Technocratic vs. The Political
- What do we try and sustain through Policies (institutions, citizens, nation states, ideologies, economic systems, something else ...)?

OF EXPERTS - III

- Are 'Expert' claims about unintelligibility of solutions to non-experts credible?
- Is 'Expertise' a false necessity; a way to avoid recognition of multiple competing concerns?
- Is it a cunning justification for a particular policy choice from amongst many possibilities?

OF EXPERTS - IV

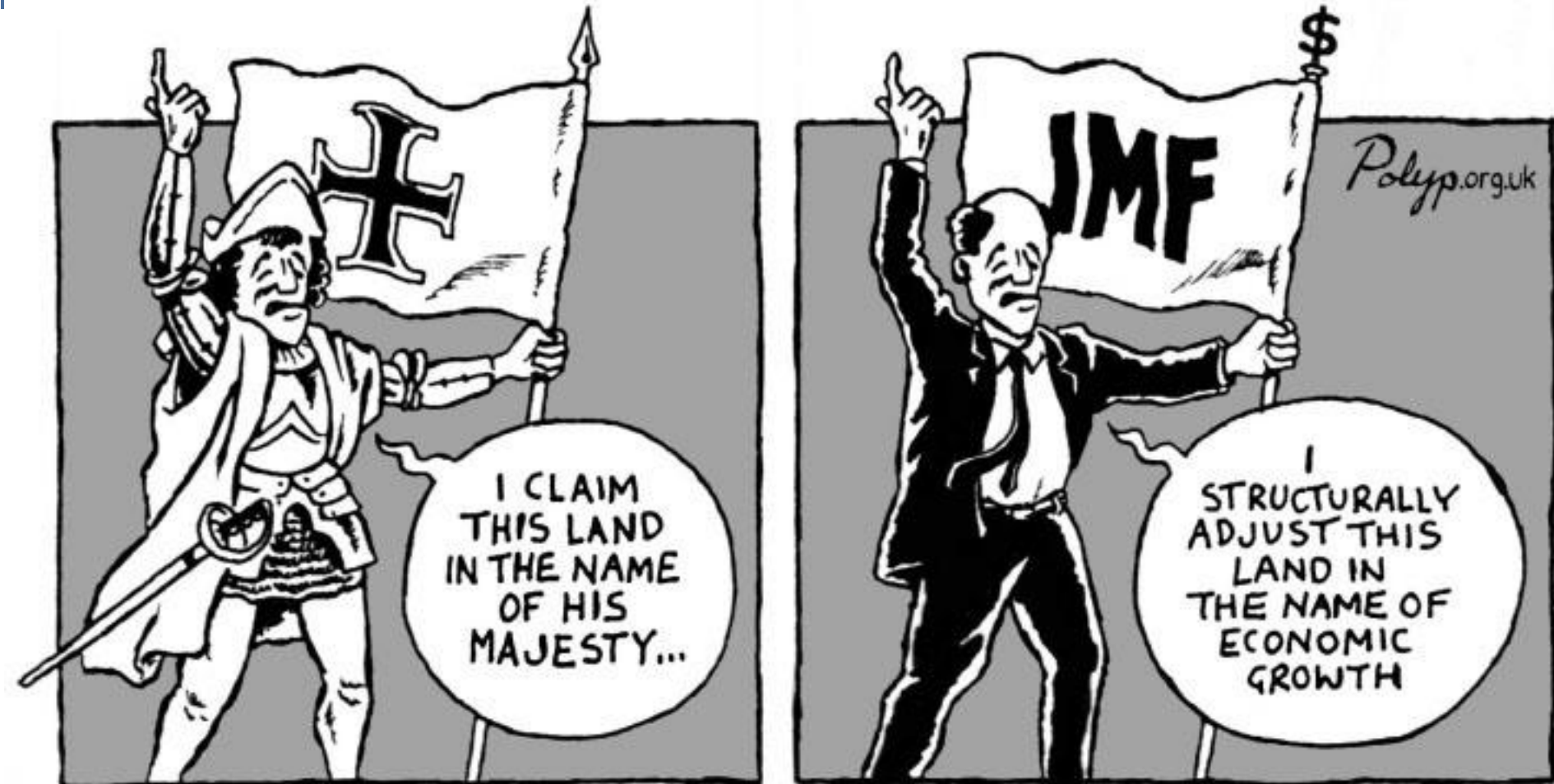
- Are laws essentially Background Rules to justify certain entrenched economic & political choices?
- Do laws perpetuate an uneven field of negotiation while pretending to be neutral?
- Can law become an escape for avoiding contentious economic & political questions?

OF EXPERTS - V

- How and when does 'Expertise' obfuscate dynamic situations & genuine controversies?
- How is 'Policy-Thinking' impeded by parochial imperatives (ideological, turf-management, strategic, political ...)
- How and when do 'Expert' discourses become open to manipulation?

POLICY-MAKING IN THE ERA OF THE

GLOBAL




'PROGRESS'

POLICY-MAKING IN THE ERA OF THE GLOBAL - I

- International Benchmarks – Helpful? Harmful? Hegemonic?
 - Ease of Doing Business Rankings
 - Good Governance Indicators
 - Rule of Law Index
 - Corruption Perceptions Index

- Best Practices – Whose & for Whom?

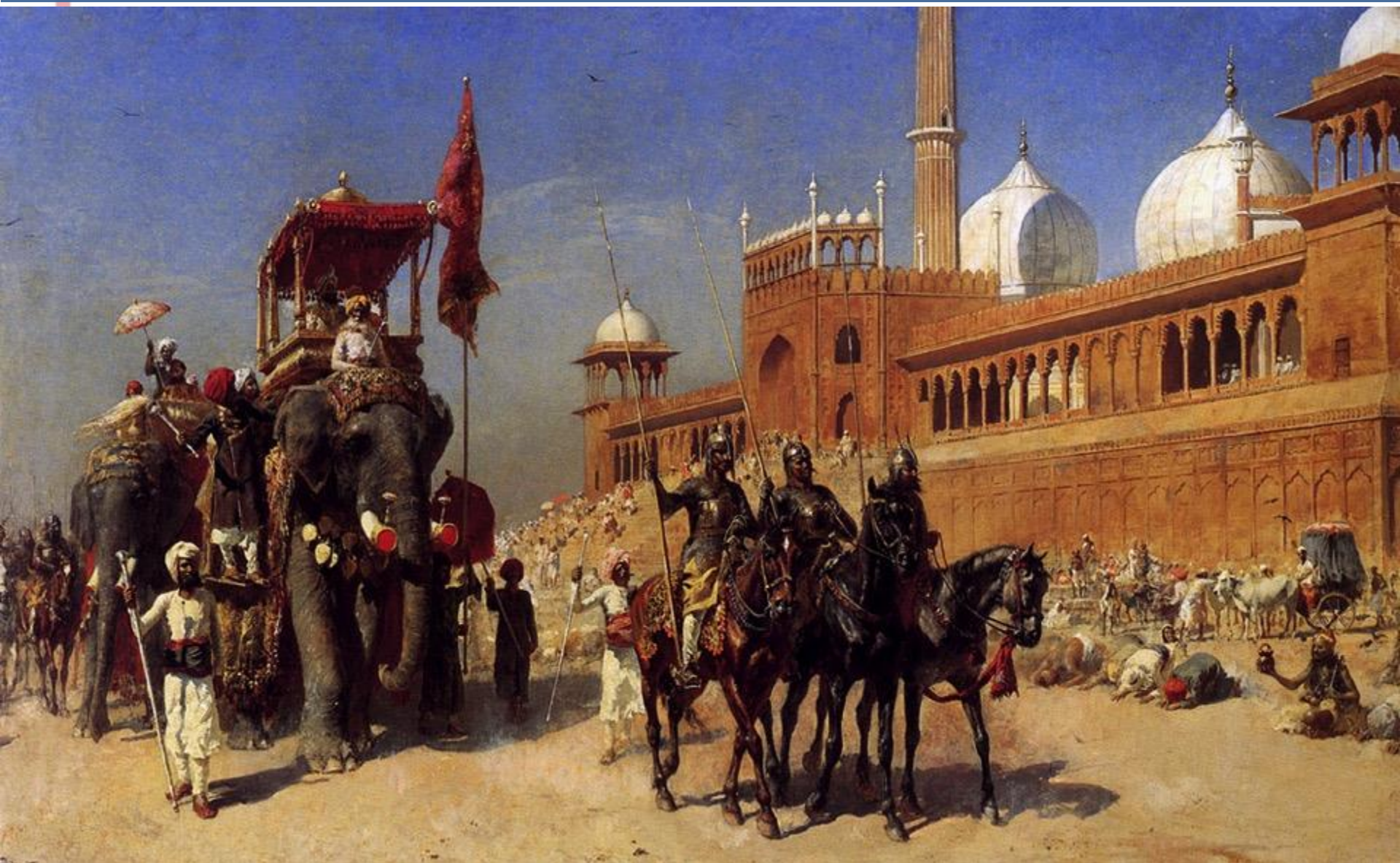
- Deep, Tough, Structural Reforms or Low Hanging Fruit? 

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POLICY-MAKING IN THE ERA OF THE GLOBAL - II

- ❑ Embedding Policy Outcomes & Sustainability
- ❑ Globalism, Cultural Relativism & Sovereignty
- ❑ Balancing the Global and the Local

DOES CONTEXT MATTER ANYMORE?



DOES CONTEXT MATTER ANYMORE? - I

- ❑ Policy-Making in the era of Universal Standards, Templates, Foreign Govt. & IFI Donors & IDCs
 - One Size Fits All
 - Cookie-Cutter Solutions & Policy Compliance Box-Ticking
 - The Avatars of Transplantation
 - IFI Political Imperatives; IDC Profit Imperatives
 - Executive Short-Cuts; Democratic Deficit

- ❑ Developing World & Path Dependencies

DOES CONTEXT MATTER ANYMORE? - II

- Tradition, Religion, Culture, Society, Politics
- The Banes of Post-Colonialism
- Civil-Military Contestations; **Deep States**
- Information Asymmetries
- State of Civil Liberties
- Supply Overemphasis: Demand-side Constraints

A FOLLY – OR REFORM WITHOUT CONTEXT



THE AGE OF DATA - I

- The Anecdotal in the Age of the Empirical
- Political Economy of Delay & Inertia
- Data as a Tool
- Data as a Weapon
- Limits of Quantitative Approaches

THE AGE OF DATA - II

- Qualitative & Quantitative – Striking a Balance
- Measuring Performance & Outcomes
- Revisiting Institutional Structure, Sociology, Culture, Transparency, Accountability & Incentives
- Upgrading Traditional Decision-Making
- Fallacy of Technology as Primary & Ultimate Solution

THE VALUE OF COMPARISONS



THE VALUE OF COMPARISONS - I

- ❑ Municipality of Systems & Comparativism's value
- ❑ Domination of Western Models – Relevance
- ❑ Pertinence of Regional Examples – Limitations
- ❑ 'National Approaches' to Policy-making
- ❑ Commonalities of the Developmental State

THE VALUE OF COMPARISONS - II

- ❑ Contexts with Pluralistic Traditions – the South
- ❑ Colonialism and its Children
- ❑ Particularities of the Autocratic & Police states
- ❑ Paucity of Regional Assessments
- ❑ Limits of Comparativism

THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- ❑ Information, Misinformation, **Disinformation**
- ❑ Empowerment/**Disempowerment**: New Trends
- ❑ Regulation: Keeping Pace with Technology
- ❑ Privacy vs Access; Free Speech vs **Hate** Speech
- ❑ Globalization & Sovereignty
- ❑ Profit, **Despotism**, **Majoritarianism**, Activism

THANK YOU!

The Best Mentors are Peers

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